

JOHN JORROCKS
AND
OTHER CHARACTERS



John Jorrocks, M.F.H., with his celebrated hunter Arterxerxes

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OTHER CHARACTERS

From the Works of
ROBERT SURTEES

by
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P R E F A C E

IN this volume I have endeavoured to produce brief studies of the more prominent characters in the principal works of Robert Surtees. Myself an ardent admirer of the creator of John Jorrocks—never moving unaccompanied by one or other of his books, never sleeping without one of his fascinating productions close at hand in case of wakefulness—it has been my aim to supply, for the convenience of fellow-enthusiasts, a handy volume, treating of well-known characters created by this inimitable sporting writer, and embracing incidents of special interest and humour in his various books, suitable as a travelling or week-end companion.

This facility for studying the characters and their exploits in many of the more notable works of Surtees, *within the cover of a single volume*, will, I trust, find favour with fox-hunters and other devotees of the famous author.

My brother's illustrations will, I feel sure, portray the appearances of the various characters more adequately than my own imperfect descriptions.

G. F.

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CHAPTER I

JOHN JORROCKS

(References are to *Handley Cross*, *Hillingdon Hall*,
and *Jorrocks's Jaunts and Jollities*.)

VERY properly, the opening chapter of this series of character sketches deals with Surtees's most famous character, John Jorrocks, the city grocer who attained the ambition of his life, not, as might be expected of a successful businessman, to acquire the dignity of civic advancement, but, *mirabile dictu*, to become a master of foxhounds and be able to append to his name what he described as "the magic letters M.F.H."

In this fox-hunting country of ours, Jorrocks is an institution. The name is as familiar to the average Briton as that of Winston Churchill, W. G. Grace or George Robey, and it speaks volumes for an author who can create a mythical character to occupy, in the memory and affection of the public, so lasting a place as the lovable, sporting old grocer has done since the appearance of that immortal work, *Handley Cross*, and will, unquestionably, continue to do, so long as fox-hunting remains one of England's foremost sports.

Even people quite unversed in the mysteries of fox-catching, people possessing little or no knowledge of hounds or horses, people who have never seen a scarlet coat, heard a view-holloa or the music of hounds—even these, in their multitudes, will know the name of Jorrocks.

Though so many Surtees characters are portrayed as being arrant humbugs—a trait that seems to have been despised above all other failings by the creator of such pretentious frauds as Soapey Sponge, Jawleyford or Marmaduke Muleygrubs—his most celebrated character, Jorrocks, was far too plain-spoken, downright and honest to be included in that category. Indeed, judging from his abrupt, decisive, or what might be described as Jorrockian methods of dealing with them, he must have been just about as contemptuous of humbugs as his creator.

No, old Jorrocks never pretended to be anything but a tradesman, and whereas the great majority of people in similar circumstances would probably have tried to conceal the fact, or at all events abstained from advertising it, our unaffected grocer, even when transformed into a master of hounds and actually out with his own, would never let slip an opportunity of selling a pound or two of tea.

Just as there was nothing mean or petty about him, so was he the very anti-thesis of a snob. To the inquiry of the Muleygrubs infant, Victoria Jemima, as to whether he was not "a great gempleman like Pa," his reply is symbolical of his honesty in claiming to be nothing more than he was—"No," said he, "not a great gempleman like Pa. He's a Peerage man. I'm only a Post Hoffice Directory

one." ' That answer was typical of Jorrocks, simple, unassuming and candid. Moreover, it was his keen sense of humour, allied to an irresistible temptation to ridicule snobbery, that prompted him to seize this chance of a sly dig at Muley-grubs who, besides being a first-class humbug, was also a confirmed snob.

John Jorrocks had, from his earliest days, been a fox-hunting enthusiast, and his increasing affluence, resulting from a thriving business, had enabled him to indulge his passion for the chase by hunting with "the Surrey." In this far from fashionable country, he was happy in the enjoyment of the sport he loved, and when the day of days arrived, bringing with it the momentous letter from Miserrimus Doleful, Master of Ceremonies at Handley Cross Spa, inviting him to accept the mastership of the Handley Cross fox-hounds, though naturally excited and gratified to a degree that prompted him rather impetuously to present his odd-job boy, Benjamin, or Binjimin as he called him, with half a pot of marmalade, thus sparing the young rascal from exerting the ingenuity that would have been required in stealing it, he (John Jorrocks) showed no signs of uppishness or cultivating a swollen head, and apart from a rather more jaunty air than usual being noticeable that morning, as he walked from his home in Great Coram Street to the city, he still remained the same plain man of business, despite the imminence of the coveted honour, involving his elevation to a considerably higher social sphere.

A shortish man, of great breadth of beam, he carried an inconvenient amount of weight both fore and aft, and was consequently anything but the ideal figure of a horseman. This drawback, and his flat refusal to test his weight in the scales, he passed off with the argument that 'he didn't ride stipplechases and wot matter did it make 'ow much he weighed? It was altogether 'twixt him and his 'oss, and weighin' wouldn't make him any lighter.'

But although nature never intended him for a horseman and, owing to the physical difficulties under which he laboured, nothing would have made him one, what he lacked in riding ability he atoned for by a natural, instinctive aptitude, combined with knowledge studiously acquired, for hunting, outwitting and killing the wily fox. There is no doubt that his knowledge of the science of fox-hunting and the huntsman's art was profound, and if only he could have kept with his hounds instead of repeatedly being pounded by "unavoidable leaps," and left floundering distressfully in the rear, he might well have claimed comparison with the best professional huntsmen. But as it was, he was obliged to employ someone to hunt hounds for him, whilst he ruled the field. Through no lack of courage was he so often left behind. Indeed, for a man of his bulk and age which, at the time of his mastership, he airily described as being between fifty and sixty, to go careering about the country as he did, in all conditions and all weathers, required a good deal more courage than most people possess. Rather should he be awarded the utmost credit for struggling so gallantly against the handicap of physical incapacity, and for his remarkable, almost boyish enthusiasm.

Jealous of our hero's reputation, some of us are, perhaps, inclined to feel a little resentful of his creator's insistence on poor clumsy, ungainly old Jorrocks's inability to go straight across country, thinking that, in all fairness to so great and

fascinating a sporting character, the real reason for his shortcomings in this respect might have been more clearly emphasized.

Let it, therefore, be repeated that Jorrocks was not cut out by nature for a horseman, and that his weight and cumbersome figure, combined with advancing years, precluded the possibility of his riding to hounds as, in other circumstances, he would have wished. ‘ “How I wish I was a heagle!” exclaimed Mr. Jorrocks, eyeing the wide-stretching vale before him. “How I wish I was a heagle, ’overin’ over ’em, seein’ which ’ound has the scent, which hasn’t, and which are runnin’ frantic for blood.” ’

He certainly had visions and dreams of dreadful catastrophes overtaking him in the hunting field, and was apt on occasions to let his active imagination run riot, as for instance when in one of his popular sporting “lectors” to the community of Handley Cross, he said: ‘ “Still a fall’s a hawful thing. Fancy a great sixteen ’and ’oss lyin’ on one like a blanket, or sittin’ with his monstrous hemispheres on one’s chest, sendin’ one’s werry soul out o’ one’s nostrils! Dreadful thought! Vere’s the brandy?” ’

But the fact that he dreaded these and such-like happenings and yet pursued his sporting activities with unabated zeal, speaks volumes for his stoutness of heart.

When tuned up to the highest pitch of excitement by the electrifying spectacle of the fox and his hounds in one field, Jorrocks would forget his disabilities and charge a low fence here and there in most gallant style. For example, on the “Cat and Custard-Pot” day we are told—“*I’ll do it,*” says he, putting Xerxes at a well broken-down cattle-gap into Wandermoor Common. This move lands him well inside the hounds, and getting upon turf he hugs his horse, resolved to ride at whatever comes in his way. Another gap, not quite so well flattened as the first, helps our friend on in his project, and emboldened by success, he rams manfully at a low stake and rice-bound gateway, and lands handsomely in the next field.’

As would be expected of a successful business man, Jorrocks was thrifty and cautious in all matters involving financial obligation, and while, in the first ecstasy of delight at receiving the invitation from Handley Cross, he felt the urge to impetuously close with the offer without delay, second and more business-like thoughts persuaded him to test the pros and cons before ultimately arriving at a decision, and prompted him to write in his reply to Miserrimus Doleful: ‘ “I have no manner of doubt at all, that I’m fully qualified for the mastership of the ’Andley Cross fox-hounds, or any other—’unting has been my ’obby ever since I could keep an ’oss, and long before—a southerly wind and a cloudy sky are my delight—no music like the melody of ’ounds. But enough of the rhapsodies, let us come to the melodies—the £. s. d. in fact. Wot will it cost?—In course its a subscription pack—then say how many *paying* subscribers have you? Wot is the *nett* amount of their subscriptions?” ’

In the same letter, his amazing enthusiasm is exemplified by the following passage: ‘ “’Unting is all that’s worth living for—all time is lost wot is not spent in ’unting—it is like the hair we breathe—if we have it not we die—its the sport

of kings, the image of war without its guilt, and only five-and-twenty per cent of its danger.”

Nevertheless, several letters were exchanged before the cautious tea-merchant at last decided to accept the invitation, ‘and wrote to say that henceforth they might append the magic letters M.F.H. to his name.’

Now, what of John Jorrocks as a family man. His immediate family consisted of Mrs. Jorrocks, a voluminous, red-faced, rather forbidding-looking woman, and a pretty grown-up niece called Belinda. He had no children, at any rate ‘“legally speakin’ none”’ as he said to Mrs. Muleygrubs on the occasion of his dining and sleeping at Cockolorum Hall.

““Chi-e-l-dren,”’ he went on, ““are certain cares, but werry uncertain comforts, as my old mother said when I hupset her snuffbox into the soup.””

There is evidence that Mrs. Jorrocks was something of a trial to our old friend, who gave the show away during his impromptu visit to Ongar Castle on the night of Lord Bramber’s coming-of-age party. Benighted and completely lost at the end of a day’s hunting, Jorrocks, soaked to the skin, tired and hungry, fetched up at Ongar Castle, where he was mistakenly admitted as an invited guest.

““Seem vet!”’ said he to the servant who conducted him upstairs, ““seem vet; I’m just as vet as a man can be and no vetter.”” Dressed in the clothes of Captain Widowfield, the guest for whom he had been mistaken, and fresh from Captain Widowfield’s bath in which he had ‘used the sponge as if it was his own,’ he was received in the castle drawing-room by Lord Bramber who, on greeting him, asked after Mrs. Jorrocks.

““Thank ’e,”’ said Mr. Jorrocks, ““thank ’e, my lordship, ’opes I sharn’t find her as I left her.””

““How’s that? I hope she is not unwell?”’ inquired his lordship with well-feigned anxiety.’

““Oh, no,”’ replied Mr. Jorrocks, raising his eyebrows with a shrug of his shoulders; “oh, no, only I left her in a werry bad humour, and I ’opes I shall not find her in one when I gets back—*haw, haw, haw—he, he he*,—s’pose your ’at (hat) covers your family—wish mine did too; for atwixt you and I and the wall, my lordship, women are werry weary warmints.””

But Mrs. Jorrocks doubtless had, at times, some reason for her tantrums, for although life at Diana Lodge, their hunting-box at Handley Cross, progressed smoothly and happily enough, Jun, as his wife called him, was by no means immune from susceptibility or insensible of female charms. A pretty face was wont to produce behaviour on the part of our flirtatious friend such as Mrs. J. could hardly be expected to condone.

Readers of *Handley Cross* will remember the M.F.H.’s visit to Sir Archey Depecarde, and that in the host’s absence, he was entertained by the attractive housekeeper, Mrs. Markham, who, after apologizing on Sir Archey’s behalf, informed Mr. Jorrocks that she was to make him ““as comfortable as possible, and show him every possible care and attention.””

““Ah, well, that’s summut like,”’ smiled Mr. Jorrocks, with a jerk of his head,

thinking what a good-looking woman she was. In another instant he was on the top step of the entrance beside her, giving her soft hand a sly squeeze as she prepared to help him out of his reversible coat.' Conducting him into the library, she said:

' "I'll have a fire lighted directly." '

' "*Fiddle the fire!*" exclaimed Mr. Jorrocks, "*fiddle the fire!* dessay you've got a good 'un in your room—I'll go *there*." '

' "Couldn't for the world," whispered Mrs. Markham, with a shake of her head, glancing her large hazel eyes lovingly upon Jorrocks. "What! if Sir Archey should hear!" '

' "Oh, he'll never hear," rejoined our friend confidently.'

' "*Wouldn't he?*" retorted Mrs. Markham. "You don't know what servants are if you think that. Bless you! they watch me just as a cat watches a mouse." '

' "Well, then, you must come in to *me*," observed Mr. Jorrocks, adding—"I can't be left mopin' alone, you know." '

' "It must be after they've gone to bed, then," whispered the lady.'

Finally, whilst questioning him as to what he would like for dinner, Mrs. Markham gave the amorous old man an opening, by asking:

' "Any sweets?" '

' "No, I'll 'ave my sweets arter," winked Mr. J. licking his lips.'

Moreover, Jorrocks was reported to be in the habit of winking at nursemaids. At any rate, an accusation to this effect was brought against him during the shameful inquiry into the state of his mind.

True, Mrs. Jorrocks might justifiably have objected to conduct such as Jun's enjoyable evening with Mrs. Markham, and undue familiarity with pretty nursemaids, but such deviation from the strict line of marital propriety would hardly seem to constitute evidence of mental instability.

Somewhat later, after Mr. Jorrocks had given up hunting and was living the life of a country squire at Hillingdon Hall, the same weakness was apparent in his association with the rival contestants for the honour of securing the Duke of Donkeyton's heir as a son-in-law, namely Mrs. Flather and Mrs. Trotter. The former a widow, and the latter possessing only a nonentity in the shape of a little insignificant, sardine-like husband, they were neither of them averse to Mr. Jorrocks's amorous advances which, in the case of Mrs. Flather, who made but feeble and futile efforts at protest, would have given Mrs. J. ample excuse for being in a 'werry bad humour,' for on one occasion he actually saluted the widow several times with resounding kisses, having first taken the precaution to lock and bolt the door of his sanctum, where, in his capacity as a Justice of the Peace, he was supposed to be giving her legal advice!

Again, his behaviour, when driving Mrs. Flather over to Donkeyton Castle, was anything but blameless.

' "Never troubles to look at a woman's face if she's clumsy and beefey about the pins," ' said Mr. Jorrocks to the lady sitting beside him. ' "*Confound them long pettikits!* There's never no sayin' wot's an under them. Unless a man spends 'alf

his time at 'Owell & James's, or Swan and Hedgar's, or some o' them man-milliner sort o' shop doors, waitin' for to see the gals get into their chays, he has no possible chance o' knowin' wot sort o' understandin's they have." "

A little later, he went on in much the same sentimental strain:

"Lord, I should like nothin' better than to be cast on a barren land, a sort o' Heel-pie island on a large scale, with an agreeable companion—*female one*, in course," added Mr. Jorrocks in an undertone, squeezing Mrs. Flather's arm, "with no bother o' servants, or nothin' o' that sort. Jest a maid to milk the cows, and another to make the beds and lay the cloth, with a silvery sailin' boat, with a blue streamer at its mast'ead, to come every Saturday night, with poultry, and pastry, and preserved fruit, and bottled stout, hoysters, marmeylad, eggs, and wermacelli, and may be a few yards o' bombazeen: not that dress would be any object, for beauty, says I, when unadorned's adorn'd the most," Mr. J. giving Mrs. Flather's arm another hearty squeeze; "but I'm sick o' the hartificial state o' society—the cards, and the compliments, the so glads, and so sorrys, the grinnin', and the gammon and spinnage o' the thing, and my wiggorous 'eart yearns for natur' unalloy'd, and the habolition o' bustles and 'oss-'air pettikits." "

As they approached the castle, 'General' Jorrocks became impressed with the impregnability of its appearance and, breaking off for a moment from his "sweet-'eartin'," declared that "even the City Light 'Oss would look uncommon blue if they'd been order'd to 'take' that castle! Fancy a panful o' 'ot lead comin' down on one's cocoa-nut from one of them 'igh places. Oh! but the hart o' love's far afore the hart o' war, isn't it, my little *dack*?" continued he, with a squeeze of the arm of Mrs. Flather.'

"To be sure an agreeable companion makes any place plisant, and I never thinks of poor Hadam alone in his beautiful garden and plisure grounds, without feelin' a sort o' compassion for him. To be sure he lived in good times, no income-tax—no 'oss-'air pettikits; but then, on the other 'and, he had no 'unting." "

"There's a deal o' plisant sentiment I always thinks in them nice lines o' Peter Pindar's:

And say, without our 'opes, without our fears,
Without the joy wot plighted love endears,
Without the smile from partial beauty won,
O vot were man? a worl'd without a sun!

Ain't there, my darlin'?" asked Mr. Jorrocks, looking under Mrs. Flather's bonnet, and squeezing her hand as it rested on his arm, a pressure, we are shocked to say, Mrs. Flather slightly returned. Mr. J. then kissed her.'

In his earlier days, the gay old dog had been up to much the same game, for in *Jorrocks's Jaunts and Jollities*, a work treating of Jorrocks's life before he became master of the Handley Cross fox-hounds, Surtees describes a very unfortunate occasion when Mrs. J. found, in a pocket of Jun's overnight coat, a card of 'delicate pale pink, with blue borders, and gilt edge,' bearing the significant inscription—"Miss Juliana Granville, John Street, Waterloo Road." This discovery, not unnaturally, led to something of a scene when our friend, whilst ravenously devouring an

enormous breakfast in the kitchen of his Great Coram Street house, preparatory to a day with the Surrey stag-hounds, was peremptorily asked by his old 'ooman for an explanation.

"Pray, *Mister J.*," said she, "what is the meaning of this card? I found it in your best coat pocket, which you had on last night, and I *do desire*, sir, that you will tell me how it came there."

Whereupon Mr. Jorrocks 'pretended to get into a thundering passion, and, seizing the card, he thrust it into the fire, swearing it was an application for admission into the Deaf and Dumb Institution where he wished he had Mrs. J.'

Also, in this phase of his existence, he acquired the reputation of having 'a nod or a wink for every pretty maid that showed at the windows.'

In fact, altogether, his heart, besides being warm and stout, was expansive to an almost limitless degree. But it was mostly harmless tomfoolery, old Jun behaving more like a big, flirting schoolboy than a man of round about three-score years, and he will surely be forgiven for these occasional mild peccadilloes.

'If to his share some trifling errors fall,
Look in his face, and you'll forget them all.'

This quotation was used by Mr. Jorrocks's legal adviser when defending him against a charge of trespass in *Jorrocks's Jaunts and Jollities*, though unhappily it failed to secure his acquittal. Yet who could look in his round, beaming, jolly old face and accuse him of anything vicious, or indeed of anything but good nature, honesty, kindliness, and a happy cheerful disposition.

'Be to his faults a little blind,
Be to his virtues ever kind.'

A different source of matrimonial trouble was our friend's unfortunate habit, resulting from his not infrequent hunting nightmares, of kicking Mrs. Jorrocks out of bed in the middle of the night, causing the poor lady, after several violent descents on to the floor, to become so exasperated as to threaten him with the law.

But it was all to no purpose, for being ' "like the hair we breathe, if we 'ave it not we die," ' hunting came first and foremost in his dreams as it did in his thoughts, and, in those dreams, the perils and vicissitudes of the chase continued to rouse the sleeper to a pitch of frantic excitement, often resulting in the aforementioned lamentable consequences to Mrs. J., and compelling her to seek refuge with Betsey, the maid of all work, or Batsey as her master pronounced it.

As in his house, as in his business, so in the hunting-field Jorrocks was a great autocrat. His decisive, downright, if rather rude manner of dealing with a hound-pressing follower on the Pomponius Ego day, is typical of the rough handling that was to be expected by erring members of his field.

"You 'air-dresser on the chesnut 'oss!" holloaing to a gentleman with very big ginger whiskers; "PRAY 'OLD 'ARD!" entreated our master.'

"HAIR-DRESSER!" exclaims the gentleman, in a fury, turning short round; "I'm an officer in the ninety-first regiment!"

“Then you hossifer in the ninety-fust regiment, wot looks like an ’air-dresser, ’old ’ard,” replied Mr. Jorrocks.

He gave short shrift to anyone having the temerity to obstruct the progress of his hounds, which he considered should have right of way all over the country.

“Hooi! you chap with the turnip-cart!” roared our master to a cartman; “vot do you mean by stickin’ your great ugly wehicle right afore my ’ounds!—Mr. Jorrocks’s ’ounds, in fact! I’ll skin ye alive!” added he, looking at the man, who stood staring with astonishment.

Mr. Jorrocks’s whole-hearted loyalty to fox-hunting, as compared with other kindred sports, was never more clearly demonstrated than in his speech at the Handley Cross hunt dinner when, being rather screwed, he proceeded to denounce, in highly provocative terms, stag-hunting, hare-hunting, coursing and racing, despite the fact that representatives of the disparaged sports were present in the room.

Of stag-hunting he said: “Might as well ’unt a hass!—see a great lolloppin’ beggar blobbin’ about the market-gardens near London, with a pack of ’ounds at its ’eels, and call that diuersion! My vig, wot a go!”

Harriers were summarily disposed of with: “Puss-’untin’ is werry well for cripples, and those that keep donkeys. Blow me tight! but I never sees a chap a trudgin’ along the turnpike, with a thick stick in his ’and, and a pipe in his mouth, but I says to myself, there goes a man well mounted for ’arriers!”

“Coursin’,” continued our venturesome old friend, “should be made a felony! Of all daft devils under the sun, a grey’ound’s the daftest!”

But of all the sports ridiculed or abused by the speaker, none got it hotter than racing.

“Racing,” declared Jorrocks, “is only for rogues! I never goes into Tat.’s on a bettin’-day, but I says to myself as I looks at the crowd by the subscription-room door, there’s a nice lot o’ petty-larceny lads! I’d rayther be a black-faced chimley sweep nor a white-faced black-leg!”

Infuriated by this wholesale condemnation, the green coats, supported by their colleagues representing other sports, and led by the racing enthusiast, Mr. Strider, showed fight, and in the ensuing rough and tumble, with fox-hunters on one side and the rest on the other, Mr. Jorrocks, besides having his wig removed by a flying plate, suffered the loss of one of his satin-lined, blue tails.

But the old ’un could be relied upon to give as good as he got, and not only did he beat a tattoo on Strider’s ribs, but exacted payment for the lost tail by ripping his coat from waist to collar.

As described in *Jorrocks’s Jaunts and Jollities*, our prejudiced hero once deigned to go out with the Surrey stag-hounds. That was on the memorable occasion when he fell foul of Mrs. J. But doubtless he went more for the sake of the bacchanalian feast that invariably terminated the proceedings, rather than in the hope of deriving any enjoyment from the outing, for soon after arriving, with his friend the Yorkshireman, at the appointed place, he began roundly abusing the stag-hunters.

“Now,” said he to the Yorkshireman, after being badgered by some of the

assembled sportsmen for a subscription to the Surrey stag-hounds, ‘“you see what an unconscionable set of dogs these stag-’unters are. They’re *at* every man for a subscription, and talk about guineas as if they grew upon gooseberry bushes. Besides, they are such a rubbishing set—all drafts from the fox-’ounds. Now there’s a chap on the piebald just by the trees—he goes into the Gazette reglarly once in three years, and yet to see him out you’d fancy all the country round belonged to him. And there’s a buck with his bearing rein so tight that he can hardly move his neck,” pointing to a gentleman in scarlet, with a tremendous stiff blue cravat, —“he lives by keeping a madhouse.”’ And so on.

Possessing so many likeable qualities, it is not unnatural that the old “bouy” should have had a highly developed sense of affection. He was fond of his hounds. ‘“Forrard on, Priestess, old betch!” cheered he, addressing himself to the now leading hound, “Forrard on!—for-rard!” adding “I’ll gie ye *sich* a plate o’ bones if we do but kill.”’ He was fond of his horses, despite the abuse and rib-roasting the long-suffering Arterxerxes so often suffered. And he was even fond of his Pigg,* whom he hugged like a great bear after the glorious ending to the “Cat and Custard-Pot” day, forgiving and forgetting the impudent behaviour of his over-indulging huntsman but a few hours earlier.

He would fill in a long winter evening by sending for Pigg, sitting him down within easy reach of a bottle, and jabbering away till far into the night about past exploits of his hounds (‘“best ’ounds goin’, best ’ounds in England, best ’ounds in Europe, best ’ounds in Europe, Hasia, Hafrica, ’Merica.”’) and the prospects of future sport, master and man toasting the hounds, toasting each other, and singing hunting songs at the top of their voices.

It was on one of these merry, grog-drinking occasions that Pigg, sticking his fuddled head into a cupboard instead of out of the window as intended, gave vent to the classic utterance, in response to his master’s inquiry about the weather, ‘“hellish dark, and smells of cheese!”’

‘“*Smells o’ cheese!*” repeated Mr. Jorrocks, looking round in astonishment, “*smells o’ cheese!*—vy, man, you’ve got your nob i’ the cupboard—this be the vinder,” continued he, rising and opening some shutters painted like the cupboard door in the other corner.’

Again, although he was to some extent in awe of Mrs. J.’s wrath, and was wont to joke about wishing his hat covered his family, he would have been at a loss without his old ’ooman, who, with all her faults and failings, was, for the most part, undeniably suitable as the consort of a prosperous tradesman, if, perhaps, a little out of her depth in the role, that had been thrust upon her, of the wife of a master of hounds.

In fact, Jorrocks about correctly summed up his attitude towards his fellow beings generally, when, in answer to a question by one of the Muleygrubs children as to whether he loved his huntsman, he said: ‘“I loves everybody, more or less, my little dear.”’

‘“Well, but would you kith him?” demanded Victoria Jemima.’

* James Pigg, Mr. Jorrocks’s north-country huntsman.

““Would you pay for his shoes?” asked Albert Erasmus (her brother), who sported a new pair himself.’

““He wears bouts, my dear,” replied our ready friend.’

Bucketing about the country as he did, often in a desperate state of anxiety as to the whereabouts of his hounds, and repeatedly demanding information of all and sundry, as for instance of a gaping, bystanding countryman: ““Pray my good man, ’ave you seen my ’ounds, Mr. Jorrocks’s ’ounds in fact,” ’ it is not altogether surprising that he sometimes became the butt of ignorant, ill-mannered bumpkins, hurling their gibes and witticisms at him as he pounded along on the labouring, rat-tailed Arterxerxes who, if it be true that familiarity breeds contempt, must have become completely indifferent to abuse and rib-roasting alike. But no matter how much they jeered at him, old Jorrocks invariably hit back, and usually scored off his tormentors in the end, his ready cockney wit standing him in good stead.

One evening, on returning to Handley Cross after a troublesome day, during which he had been soused in a muddy ditch when trying to lead over the recalcitrant Arterxerxes, Mr. Jorrocks was subjected to most unmerited ridicule, his persecutors, curiously enough, on this occasion being of the ‘pettikit’ brand who, as a rule, were accustomed to smile coyly in response to our friend’s familiar winks.

This time, at all events, winking, if attempted, produced anything but the usual effect, for as the old boy passed, Mrs. Gallon, landlady of the Barley-mow beer-shop, ‘who was nursing a child at the door, exclaimed across the street, to Blash the barber’s pretty but rather wordy wife:

““*A—a—a!* ar say Fanny!—old Fatty’s had a fall!””

‘To which Mrs. Blash replied with a scornful toss of her head, at our now admiring friend:

““*Hut!* he’s always on his back, that old feller.””

““Not ’alf so often as you are, old gal!” retorted the now indignant Mr. Jorrocks, spurring on out of hearing.’

When roused to anger, as he not infrequently was during the trials, anxieties and hazards of the chase, Jorrocks could use his tongue on luckless objects of his displeasure with withering invective and almost as much vigour as he employed in the constant flagellations of poor Arterxerxes.

Chief of these objects was Benjamin, the cockney whipper-in—late odd-job boy in Great Coram Street—who repeatedly incurred the wrath of his employer by his inefficiency as a hunt servant, his very obvious distaste for the sport generally, and his whimpering objection to boring holes in obstacles for the benefit of his master.

““*Go on!* ye miserable man-monkey of a boy!” cries Jorrocks, as Xerxes now turned tail, nearly upsetting our master—“Oh, you epitome of a tailor! you’re of no more use wi’ ’ounds than a lady’s-maid,—do believe I could make as good a whipper-in out of a carrot!””

On another occasion: ““Come hup, you snivellin’, drivellin’, son of a lucifer match-maker!” he roars out to Ben, who is coming lagging along in his master’s

wake. "Come hup, I say, ye miserable, road-ridin', dish-lickin' cub! and give me that quad, for you're a disgrace to a saddle, and only fit to toast muffins for a young ladies' boardin' school. I wouldn't give tuppence a dozen for such beggarly boys; no, not if they'd give me a paper bag to put them in." "

And a little later, on the same day— "Come on, ye miserable, useless son of a lily-livered besom-maker," he roars to Benjamin, who is craning and funking at the place his master has come so gallantly over. "Rot ye," adds Jorrocks, as the horse turns tail, "I'll bind ye 'prentice to a salmon pickler." "

But with his kindly generous nature, anger soon cooled, and vexations were quickly forgotten.

Possessed of an enormous appetite, and an inordinate fondness for what he called "wittles," Jorrocks was wont to get into a state of hopeful anticipation, if not of actual excitement, when being entertained. He found it difficult—if indeed he ever tried—to abstain from audible criticisms of the fare provided, and his comments were, more often than not, disparaging. Being no respecter of persons, he boldly and bluntly said what he thought, regardless of where or with whom he was dining, and, it should be added, sleeping, for as he so often announced—"where I dines I sleeps." "

Thus, on the occasion of the famous dinner-party at Cockolorum Hall, even before the assembled company had reached their places in the dining-room, our friend, with almost unbelievable impudence, began criticizing the *ménage* to his hostess, Mrs. Muleygrubs.

"Vot, you've *three* of these poodered puppies, have you?" observed Mr. Jorrocks, as they passed along the line; adding, "You come it strong!" "

"We can't do with less," replied the lady, the cares of dinner strong upon her.'

"*Humph!* Well, I doesn't know 'bout that," grunted Mr. Jorrocks, forcing his way up the room, seizing and settling himself into a chair on his hostess' right; "Well, I doesn't know 'bout that," repeated he, arranging his napkin over his legs, "women waiters agin the world, say I! I'll back our Batsey, big and 'ippy as she is, to beat any two fellers at waitin'." "

"God bless us! what a dinner!" ejaculated Mr. Jorrocks, involuntarily.'

"Shall I give you a little *ding-dong*?" ' he inquired of his hostess.

"It's turkey," observed the lady.'

"True!" replied Mr. Jorrocks; "*ding-dong's* French for turkey." "

On being handed a dish of mince by Stiffneck, one of the "poodered puppies," he remarked, after some deliberation, 'motioning it away with his hand: "No, no, no, I likes to chew my own meat." "

And on rissoles being substituted:

"Large marbles," observed Mr. Jorrocks aloud to himself—"large marbles," repeated he, as he at length succeeded in penetrating the hide of one with a spoon. "Might as well eat lead," observed he aloud, sending them away too.'

Then, the old grocer's fundamental instincts coming to the surface, he began to estimate the cost of the food.

"*Humph!*" grunted our friend, eyeing each dish as it was uncovered. "*Humph!*"

repeated he—"not much there—three shillins for the top dish, one for the bottom, and eighteen-pence say for the four sides—five and six altogether—think I could do it for five." "

But soon afterwards, Mr. Jorrocks almost surpassed even himself in capacity for invective, when opening the flood-gates of his wrath upon the luckless Stiff-neck, who, unwittingly, had emptied part of the contents of a decanter down our master's sleeve.

"Rot ye, ye great lumberin' beggar!" exclaimed Mr. Jorrocks, furiously indignant; "Rot ye, do ye think I'm like Miss Biffin, the unfortunate lady without harms or legs, that I can't 'elp myself?" "

This was followed by a dissertation, directed to Mrs. Muleygrubs, on the disadvantages of what he called "Flunkey fellers," which he concluded by saying:

"Besides, you never see a bosky Batsey waiter, which is more than can be said of all dog 'uns." "

"Good cheese! Mr. Jorrocks," exclaimed his host, up the table; "good cheese, eh?" "

"C-h-i-e-l-dren," drawled our master, pushing away his unfinished plate, "would eat any q-u-a-a-n-tity of it." "

Nor did his off-hand, free and easy familiarity cease with the clearing of the table, for on arrival, with the dessert, of the Muleygrubs litter, he inquired of one of the children:

"And 'ow many pinches did the nus give your cheeks to make them this pretty pink?" "

"Thre-e-e," drawled the child.'

"Hush! nonsense!" frowned Mrs. Muleygrubs, holding up a forefinger.'

"She d-i-i-i-d!" whined the child, to the convulsion of the company.'

During Jorrocks's expedition to France, described in *Jaunts and Jollities*, he was similarly outspoken about the food, which, to him, was of course as foreign as the language.

Arriving by diligence at Abbeville, he and his friend the Yorkshireman repaired to the Fidèle Berger—or Fiddle Burgur as our cockney friend called it—for dinner.

Ravenously hungry as usual, Jorrocks awaited, with as much patience as he could muster and a watering mouth, the start of the meal. But when the cover had been removed from the steaming tureen of macaroni soup, 'his countenance fell fifty per cent, as the first spoonful passed before his eyes,—“My vig, why, it's water!” exclaimed he—"water, I do declare, with worms in it—I can't eat such stuff as that—it's not man's meat—oh dear, oh dear, I fear I've made a terrible mistake in coming to France! and look what stuff is here—beef boiled to rags!—well, I never, *no never*, saw anything like this before. Oh, I wish I was in Great Coram Street again!" "

Food, in abundance and of the best, was never lacking in Great Coram Street. Jorrocks saw to that. His capacity was truly phenomenal, and when the provisions called upon for his breakfast with the Yorkshireman in *Jorrocks's Jaunts and Jollities*,

are set out in detail, one feels that even Betsey, who prepared the meal and was familiar with her master's rapacious appetite, must surely have been staggered by the quantity, variety and substantiality of the fare her master demanded.

So as to gain some idea of the prodigious immensity of the feast—monstrous feast as the Duke of Donkeyton in *Hillingdon Hall* would have called it—let us take a peep at the old glutton, as he sits with his friend from Yorkshire on either side of a table before the kitchen fire.

'In the centre stood a magnificent uncut ham, with a great quartern loaf on one side and a huge Bologna sausage on the other; besides these there were nine eggs, two pyramids of muffins, a great deal of toast, a dozen ship-biscuits, and half a pork-pie, while a dozen kidneys were spluttering on a spit before the fire, and Betsey held a gridiron covered with mutton chops on the top; altogether there was as much as would have served ten people.'

'“Now,” said Jorrocks, “let us be doing, for I am as hungry as a hunter. Hope you are *peckish* too; what shall I give you? tea or coffee?—but take both—coffee first and tea after a bit. If *I* can't give you them good, don't know who can. You must pay your *devours*, as we say in France, to the 'am, for it is an especial fine one, and *do* take a few eggs with it; there, I've not given you above a pound of 'am, but you can come again you know—'waste not, want not'. Now take some muffins, *do*, pray. Batsey, bring some more cream, and set the kidneys on the table, the Yorkshireman is getting nothing to eat. Have a chop with your kidney, werry luxterous—I could eat an elephant stuffed with grenadiers, and wash them down with a ocean of tea; but pray lay in to the breakfast, or I shall think you don't like it. There, now take some tea and toast or one of those biscuits, or whatever you like; would a little more 'am be agreeable? Batsey, run into the larder and see if your Missis left any of that cold chine of pork last night—and hear, bring the cold goose, and any cold flesh you can lay hands on, there are really no wittles on the table. I am quite ashamed to set you down to such a scanty *fork* breakfast.” ’ concluded he to his friend.

Like everything else he undertook, whether eating, trading, hunting or making love to the ladies, Jorrocks, on giving up his hounds, applied himself to farming with characteristic enthusiasm.

In his hunting days he had unwittingly set a standard for himself to live up to, with an entry in his journal of the following axioms for farmers:

‘ “Confound all farmers say I, wot deal in double ditches!” ’

‘ “Confound all farmers say I, wot mend their fences with old wire rope!” ’

‘ “Confound all farmers say I, wot don't keep their gates in good order!” ’

‘ “Confound all farmers say I, wot are unaccommodatin' about gaps!” ’

‘ “Confound all farmers say I, wot arn't flattered by 'avin' their fields ridden over!” ’

‘ “Confound all farmers say I, wot grumble at the price o' grain and then plough out their grass!” ’

‘ “Confound all farmers say I, wot hobject to 'avin' a litter of foxes billeted upon them!” ’

“*Confound all farmers say I, wot hobject to walkin’ the M.F.H. a pup!*” ’

“*Confound all farmers say I, wot don’t keep their stock at ’ome, when the ’ounds are out!*” ’

“*Confound all farmers say I, wot let their ’erds keep a cur!*” ’

“*Confound all farmers say I, wot ’aven’t a round o’ beef or a cold pork-pie to pull out, when the ’ounds pass!*” ’

“*Confound all farmers say I, wot ’aven’t a tap of good ‘October’ to wash them down with!*” ’

At any rate, whether he adhered to these principles or not, there is no doubt he took his new life, as a country squire, seriously, and what he lacked in knowledge, he made up for in keenness.

Horried at the lethargic and rather antiquated methods of his tenant farmers, he set about waking them up, forming an agricultural association, of which he became vice-president, turning his mind towards scientific aids to farming, such as mechanical reapers, draining tiles, etc., and went about the country preaching the gospel of draining the land, and its treatment with various kinds of fertilizer, including what he called “nitrate o’ sober.”

So that he soon began to make his presence felt throughout the countryside around Hillingdon.

“It behoves us to be awake,” ’ said Farmer Jorrocks to Johnny Wopstraw, one of his tenants—“and to drain and dust our land with hashes and bone manure, nitrate o’ sober, and all that sort o’ stuff. The farmers here seem a long way behind the hintelligence o’ the day.” ’

Whereupon Wopstraw, who rarely uttered without prefacing or accompanying his remarks by his pet phrase, “on the who-ole,” drawled out with characteristic deliberation, replied:

“Why, now, as to drainin’, upon the who-ole, I should say it’s the foundation of all agricultural improvement.” ’

At the invitation of the Duke of Donkeyton, who was anxious to keep Mr. Jorrocks on his side of the political fence, our squire became a Justice of the Peace. And as on that former momentous occasion, when he received the gratifying letter from Miserrimus Doleful, asking him to take the Handley Cross hounds, so, when finding himself elevated to the honourable position of what he called a “beak,” his first impulse was to send for Benjamin.

Now, whereas, when summoned in Great Coram Street, the young ruffian had been occupied in nothing more rascally than peering through the keyhole of Mr. Jorrocks’s door; this time, when called by his master, he was actually in the act of robbing the larder, as his shamefaced appearance would have indicated, had not our exulting old friend been too absorbed in his news to notice it.

“Binjimin,” said he, “Binjimin,” repeated Mr. Jorrocks, not knowing exactly how to begin, “Binjimin,” said he, for the third time, “greatness has come down upon me this mornin’ in a shower—a regular clothes-basketful of honour. That great man, the Duke o’ Donkeyton, has appointed me one of Her Majesty’s justices o’ the peace. And, Binjimin, you have always been an honest, sober, meritorious, and

industrious servant, and wirtue shall not be its own reward in your case—I'll make you my clerk." "

Obviously, in expressing such sentiments, the old man's exultation had fogged his mind, and produced a vision before his eyes, wherein anything less than perfection found no place, for, in reality, no more useless, idle, mischievous or dishonest young rogue than Master Ben, could be found in a day's march.

' "Crikey O!" exclaimed Benjamin, clapping his dirty hands.'

' "But," said Mr. Jorrocks, eyeing his dirty paws, "now that you will 'ave to do with pen and ink and wite paper, you must contrive to keep your hands clean. Also your mug. And talking of mugs, now that we are worshipful, it becomes us to be grave and respectable-lookin'. You are goin' to be advanced to a post of honour and distinction above your years, therefore it will be necessary to endeavour to make your years come up to the post, as the post will not come down to your years. I shall therefore get you a Welsh wig, and a pair of green specs, also an usher's gown, so that when you sit below me in the justice-room, you may have an imposin' and venerable appearance, and may awe the waggabones (vagabonds) by your looks." "

After Mr. Jorrocks, in due course of time, had been sworn in as a Justice of the Peace, Surtees tells us: 'He felt like a very great man. He ran his mind through the backward course of life—thought of the time when he swept out his master's shop for his meat—then when he got a trifle for wages—next how he was advanced to clerkship—how he bought his first pair of top boots—how he stamped out two pair before he got a horse; his horses then came in chronological order, like kings and queens in a Memoria Technica. His first, a white one, that tumbled neck and crop with him down Snow Hill, and broke both its own knees and his nose; his second, a brown, that always tried to kick him over his head when he mounted; and so he went on through a long list, the recollection of each bringing with it many other interesting associations. Then he thought of the day when he was elected a member of the Surrey Hunt, and of the glories and honours he had reaped in that sporting country. Then of his advancement to the mastership of the Handley Cross Foxhounds, his short though brilliant reign at the Spa, and now how a whole wheelbarrowful of greatness had been heaped upon him in the shape of a J.P.-ship.'

' "Vell," ' said he with becoming modesty, ' "for all this I am but mortal man." "

As a magistrate, Mr. Justice Jorrocks as he now felt entitled to call himself, was down like a ton of bricks on all malefactors, looking as though he would eat them when administering a Jorrockian rebuke, and being especially severe on what he called "waggabones."

To those brought before him by Joshua Sneakington, the village constable, he was wont to apply the methods of phrenology, whereby he aimed at discovering the accused's weaknesses.

' "Vot's 'appen'd now, Binjimin?" exclaimed Mr. Jorrocks, starting back; "vot's 'appen'd now?" "

' "A waggabone," squeaked Benjamin through the door.'

' "Confound them waggabones," muttered Mr. Jorrocks. "Wot 'un a nob 'as he?" "

“I harn’t examined his nob,” replied Benjamin; “Jos has only just cotch’d him!”

“Oh, confound it, Binjimin, ’ow can you trouble me in this ’ere way. Here am I investigin’ a *desp’rate* bugglary (he was at the time closetted with Mrs. Flather behind locked doors), and you comes interruptin’ of me, without havin’ taken the dimensions of his cocoa-nut. I tells you, never bring a waggabone forrard until you’ve examined his perrycranium.”

“Yes, sir,” said Benjamin, muttering as he went, with a shake of his head, “desperate bugglary, indeed! I knows better nor that.”

After further interruptions by Benjamin with information that the “waggabone,” a boy of twelve, had been caught red-handed stealing gooseberries from a garden, and that his bump of acquisitiveness—the “priggin’ bamp” as Mr. Jorrocks called it—was “werry big,” our magistrate, who by this time had been obliged to open the door, gave the following directions:

“Well, Binjimin, I think he’s too young to send to quod; I’ll deal *sammarily* with the case. Take him to Batsey with my compliments, and say I’ll thank her to take him into the laundry, and give him a good basternaderin’—good strappin’, that’s to say. A dozen or so,” observed Mr. Jorrocks. “And bid her put a pair o’ stockins in his mouth, so that we mayn’t be troubled with his noise.”

“Yes, sir,” said Benjamin.

“Dirty ’uns!” added Mr. Jorrocks, as Benjamin went away.

Jorrocks’s good will and enthusiasm remained, to the end of the story, among his outstanding characteristics, for when invited to stand for Parliament, in the interests of the farmers, he agreed, against his inclinations, out of sympathy for his fellow agriculturists; and, having agreed, set about the task of winning the seat in his customary thorough and energetic manner.

Aided by the exertions of our old friend James Pigg who, after a spell with his “coosin” Deavilboger, had returned to the service of his former master as a sort of general factotum, and by the unanimous vote of the local farmers, Mr. Jorrocks, following a strenuous contest, during which no quarter was asked or given, succeeded in defeating his opponent, the Marquis of Bray, heir to the Duke of Donkeyton, by the narrow but sufficient margin of two votes, and thus, with the acquisition of the letters M.P.—to his mind of far less importance than M.F.H.—reached yet another milestone along the road of fame.

In the space available, it has been possible to sketch but the briefest outline of this extraordinary, yet amazingly fascinating character. A character that has given infinite pleasure to all fox-hunters, as well as joy to countless non-hunting admirers of Surtees.

The cockney son of a washerwoman, who rose to the eminence of a master of hounds, and carried it through successfully, indeed triumphantly, thanks to an open, jovial, honest countenance; an acute, infectious sense of humour; a warm-hearted friendliness; a profound contempt for pretentiousness or swagger; and, above all, a knowledge of fox-hunting, acquired by both practical and theoretical study, combined with an almost uncanny instinct for hitting off the line of a fox, which

few would think possible for a city grocer to possess, and which might well be envied by many an orthodox master of hounds or experienced professional huntsman.

Honest as the day is long—paying 20s. in the pound he believed to be the hallmark of respectability—if he suffered from certain drawbacks such as vulgarity, outspokenness, undue familiarity, and a fat, ungainly, rather coarse figure, old Jorrocks endeared himself to everyone by his twinkling eye, his happy beaming smile, and his irresistibly generous nature.

CHAPTER II

SOAPEY SPONGE

(References are to *Mr. Sponge's Sporting Tour* and *Mr. Romford's Hounds*.)

OF the many Surtees humbugs, Mr. Soapey Sponge was, perhaps, one of the greatest. But with all his pretensions, midst the medley of unscrupulous make-believe, there arose one accomplishment that stood out real and true. This was his ability as a horseman and a rider to hounds.

Not even those who had suffered most from his depredations could have denied him credit on that score, or have failed to admire his boundless enthusiasm for the chase.

But, unfortunately, there was little he did in life that had not, behind it, some mercenary motive.

Entirely dependent on himself to keep body and soul together, quite apart from the provision of entertainment and sport, he contrived, thanks to a generous supply of wits, not only to accomplish the former desirable object, but also to procure, mainly in comfortable, if not luxurious, circumstances, a fair amount of the latter.

Even his hunting and visiting were by no means disinterested activities, for, by the one, he purposed lucrative, if utterly shameless, horse-dealing, and by the other, nosing around for an heiress.

By posing as a man of means, with a long string of horses and nothing to do but hunt, Mr. Sponge completely bamboozled his intended victims who, with their own motives hardly less self-seeking than his own—some looking to acquire a rich son-in-law, others to find a wealthy god-parent for a recent squalling addition to the family, and so on—pressed invitations upon him, which they afterwards bitterly regretted.

So in one way or another, our friend managed to get his hunting, besides what Facey Romford would call "wear and tear for his teeth," with only the rare necessity of putting his hand in his pocket. He might in fact be said to have solved the supposedly insoluble problem of how to get something for nothing, or next door to nothing, and how to live without private means or an earned, as distinct from an acquired, income.

It should here be mentioned that Soapey's horses were usually job-screws, vicious on some account or other, obtained from another impostor, one Benjamin Buckram, of whom more anon, under somewhat complicated arrangements, by which, in the end, Mr. Sponge was no loser. Indeed, through the ingenuity employed by each of them on his own behalf, both prospered exceedingly as a result of their association.



Mr. Sponge arriving at the house of one of his victims

When first introduced by Surtees, in *Mr. Sponge's Sporting Tour*, the subject of that enthralling work was strolling listlessly along Oxford Street, as was his daily habit when in London, with no particular occupation, unless ogling the women and keenly criticizing the horses can be classified under that heading—and, incidentally, he was no bad judge of either.

A young man of spare build, medium height, with a good leg for a boot, but withal a strong wiry appearance, Mr. Sponge was almost the perfect figure of a light-weight horseman. Fair-headed, he affected a profusion of whiskers around his face, very much in the style of the "Newgate frill," with a shaved upper lip.

His walking, or rather strolling, dress proclaimed to even the most inexperienced observers that he was by no means a stranger to horses. Long-cut coats with capacious pockets, often containing one or other of his hands; close-fitting trousers, advertising the superb artistry of his tailor, falling low over neat, highly-polished, lightly-soled boots; a hard hat, fitted at the back with a tell-tale ring, and so built as to be impervious to an Imperial crowner—this was the costume that in the daytime normally adorned the figure of Mr. Sponge, when not actually hunting.

Like many Surtees characters, Soapey was much given to blunt speaking; indeed, at times, this amounted to unadulterated rudeness. He called a spade a spade. In fact he sometimes went almost far enough to describe it in the words of a certain Bishop of Bath and Wells who, in answer to a labourer's apology for his bad language in a railway carriage, ending with the excuse "me and my mate always calls a spade a spade," is reputed to have said: "Do you really, my good man, I should have thought you would call it a —— shovel."

Chock-full of assertion and impudence, Sponge cared nothing for what people said or thought of him, his skin being as tough and impenetrable as the proverbial hide of the rhinoceros. To gain his ends—usually rather disreputable ends—he would go to almost any lengths, often resorting to behaviour which no ordinary person would have had either the brazen effrontery to contemplate, or the nerve to practise.

Information as to Mr. Sponge's breeding not being available, his place on the ladder of gentility can only be assessed on appearances, and these, it must at once be admitted, cannot be said to entitle him to one of the higher rungs, his many rough edges proclaiming him to be anything but a gentleman in the accepted meaning of the word. He, however, imposed upon people by pretending to be one, in fact that was part of his stock-in-trade, for, aided by the gullibility of human nature, he, more often than not, contrived to get his foot in, and firmly establish himself before ultimate enlightenment burst like a storm on his undiscerning hosts. But by that time, little short of an earthquake would have got rid of him until it suited him to go.

His policy, and a very shrewd one, was never, if he could help it, to leave one sanctuary before making sure of another. And so he moved from house to house, at varying intervals of time, according to how soon he was found out and, when the resulting pressure brought to bear became uncomfortable, how soon he could see his way into another crib.

Astuteness—for want of a less polite word—in the noble art of horse-coping, being one of Mr. Sponge's most prominent characteristics, let us, to begin with, examine his methods of pursuing this fascinating and mysterious business, so desirable to people like our friend Soapey, as a means of helping to keep the pot boiling.

Before embarking on one of his combined hunting and marauding expeditions, the first consideration was the provision of horses, for Mr. Sponge rarely *owned* a horse, preferring, as we have seen, or rather being obliged by force of circumstances, to acquire job horses, with the option of selling them as though they were his own, and then completing the arrangement with the real owner to their mutual satisfaction.

Wherefore, we find him one morning setting out from his London lair, the Bantam Hotel in Bond Street, to visit Mr. Buckram who had, as he himself described it, “a little hindependence of his own” in the outskirts of the metropolis, to see what he could find to carry him in whatever country he might decide to honour with his presence.

After being deposited from a bus at the northern extremity of the Edgware Road, a short walk brought our friend to the farm he was looking for.

“Ah, Mr. Sponge!” exclaimed Buckram with well-assumed gaiety; “you should have been here yesterday; sent away two sich osses—perfect ’unters—the werry best I do think I ever saw in my life; either would have bin the werry oss for your money. But come in, Mr. Sponge, sir, come in.”

Sponge lost no time in coming to the point, and started off on his, doubtless, previously prepared plan of campaign.

“Now, Buckram,” said he, “I’ll tell you how it is. I’m deuced hard up,—regularly in Short’s Gardens. I lost eighteen ’underd on the Derby, and seven on the Leger, the best part of my year’s income, indeed; and I just want to hire two or three horses for the season, with the option of buying, if I like; and if you supply me well, I may be the means of bringing grist to your mill; you twig, eh?”

“Well, Mr. Sponge,” replied Buckram, sliding several consecutive half-crowns down the incline plane of his pocket, “I shall be happy to do my best for you.”

The cunning old dealer then went off into a long rigmarole, so as to give time for the necessary “preparations” in the stables. But Soapey knew all the tricks of the trade, and just how much attention was merited by such rambling verbiage. He consequently said nothing, but remained deep in thought until at length, Mr. Buckram, after consultation with his head-man, Leather—a little bullet-headed ruffian who had been most things in the horse line from a full-dress coachman downwards—and having rejected one or two crocks that had nearly reached the alms-house stage, as unsuitable for so accomplished a horseman as he knew his visitor to be, ordered out a horse named Hercules, or Ercles as he called him.

“There’s an ’orse!” exclaimed he. “If that ’orse were down in Leicestersheer, he’d fetch three ’underd guineas.”

But Mr. Sponge was well aware that only some serious defect could account for so good-looking a horse, and one showing every sign of “going,” being in

Buckram's third-rate hands. And, indeed, he was not far wrong, for in reality the rascally old dealer had bought him, with a reputation for kicking and bolting thrown in, for thirty pounds!

Still, as long as a horse could gallop and jump, qualities which Mr. Sponge satisfactorily tested over Buckram's schooling fences, our friend was sufficiently bold a horseman to accept a certain amount of rough with the smooth, confident that his strong horsemanship might well minimize, if not entirely eliminate, the trouble whatever it might be.

At any rate, Sponge felt that, if hidden vices, yet to be revealed, were not too troublesome, Hercules would make a very useful hunter.

Ultimately, as a result of much cogitation on the part of Soapey, and a wealth of horse-coping jargon from the voluble Buckram, an arrangement was arrived at whereby Hercules and a tear-away chestnut called Multum-in-Parvo, whose acceptance by Sponge was decidedly one up to Buckram, were turned over to our hero, together with the ex-coachman, Peter Leather, on conditions of hire and the option of purchase with which both parties to the transaction seemed thoroughly satisfied, each fancying his astuteness to have proved superior to that of the other. Actually there was very little in it—scarcely a hap'orth to choose between them.

A little further investigation of Mr. Sponge's *modus operandi* in the horse-dealing line takes us to Laverick Wells, a fashionable watering-place, whither our adventurous friend had repaired with his newly-acquired stud, on hearing of a most promising "fish"—no less a person than Mr. Waffles, M.F.H., a wealthy young man whose lavish hospitality and happy-go-lucky extravagance were the talk of the place.

On the day following Soapey's arrival, a drag was arranged by Waffles over the stiffest part of the country, with a view to getting the new-comer into grief and taking the conceit out of him, reports having been spread abroad by Leather that his master was rolling in riches, the possessor of any number of horses, and a hard rider to boot.

Riding the redoubtable Hercules, Mr. Sponge had little difficulty in cutting down the entire opposition of jealous rivals, with the gratifying result that they were soon nibbling for a deal, and, did they but know it, playing with fire.

"That's a nice horse of yours," observed Mr. Waffles to Mr. Sponge, as the latter rode alongside the master of the hounds.'

"I think he is," replied Sponge. "I like him a good deal better to-day than I did the first time I rode him."'

"What, he's a new one, is he?" asked Mr. Waffles.'

"Bought him in Leicestershire," replied Sponge. "He belonged to Lord Bullfrog, who didn't think him exactly up to his weight."'

This bare-faced untruth slid from Mr. Sponge's tongue with the ease and unblushing assurance that could only be possible to the practised hand.

Moreover, it was sufficiently impressive, bolstered up, as it had been, with sundry other specimens of Soapey's "moonshine," to bring about a definite "bite," when, on the following day, Mr. Waffles's chief hanger-on—one Caingey Thornton, said

by Leather to be "as big a little blackguard as any in the place"—scenting the possibility of a handsome commission, approached Mr. Sponge about Hercules.

"He's a fine horse," observed Mr. Thornton.'

"So he ought," replied Mr. Sponge; "I gave a hatful of money for him—two hundred and fifty golden sovereigns, and not a guinea back. Bullfrog's the biggest screw I ever dealt with."

"Well, if you should feel disposed to part with him, perhaps you will have the kindness to let me know," observed Mr. Thornton; adding, "he's not for myself, of course, but I think I know a man he would suit, and who would be inclined to give a good price for him."

"I will," replied Mr. Sponge; "I will," repeated he; adding, "if I *were* to sell him, I wouldn't take a farthing under three 'underd for him—three 'underd *guineas*, mind, *not pounds*."

"That's a vast sum of money," observed Mr. Thornton.'

"Not a bit on't," replied Mr. Sponge. "He's worth it all, and a great deal more. Indeed, I haven't said, mind, that I'll take that for him; all I've said is that I wouldn't take less."

"Just so," replied Mr. Thornton.'

"He's a horse of high character," observed Mr. Sponge. "Indeed, he has no business out of Leicestershire; and I don't know what set my fool of a groom to bring him here."

"Well, I'll see if I can coax my friend into giving what you say," observed Mr. Thornton.'

"Nay, never mind coaxing," replied Mr. Sponge, with the utmost indifference; "never mind coaxing; if he's not anxious, my name's 'easy.' Only mind ye, if I ride him again, and he carries me as he did yesterday, I shall clap on another fifty. Put him in a steeplechase, and you'd get your money back in ten minutes, and a bagful to boot."

"True," observed Mr. Thornton, treasuring that fact up as an additional inducement to use to his friend.'

The friend was, of course, Waffles—a mere cipher in the hands of such a horse-coping professor as Sponge—and without demur the bargain was closed, Waffles paying three hundred guineas for a vicious animal, which lost no time in demonstrating its vagaries, by carrying Mr. Caingey Thornton through the plate-glass window of a shop.

But the sinister firm of Messrs. Sponge and Buckram, Ltd., had by no means closed accounts with the luckless and helplessly inexperienced Waffles who, as a potential gold-mine, was to be worked more yet.

Wherefore, the silver-jingling dealer, with "a little hindependence of his own," reappeared on the scene, and, after holding forth to Waffles at great length on the demerits of Hercules, a horse that he declared he knew when owned by Lord Bullfrog, and seriously alarming the perplexed youth with details of the animal's vicious and dangerous qualities, agreed to rid him of the encumbrance and pay Waffles twenty sovereigns with one thrown back!

Finally, on receiving from Buckram a telegram: "all right," Mr. Sponge, who by this time had returned to his London quarters at the Bantam Hotel, began the concluding phase of his campaign against the rich young master of hounds, by pretending that Lord Bullfrog felt aggrieved at the suggestion that he had been guilty of sharp practice in selling a vicious horse, and threatened legal proceedings. There followed a good deal of correspondence, from which it was clear that the almost demented Waffles would be prepared to go far in order to avoid an action, and he ultimately agreed to pay £250 in settlement!

On receiving the fruits of this shameless robbery, Mr. Sponge, meditating on the ease with which it had been carried out, characteristically exclaimed:

' "*Confound it! I don't do myself justice! I'm too much of a gentleman!* I should have had five 'underd—such an ass as Waffles deserves to be done!" ' "

Another piece of flagrant extortion was perpetrated by Mr. Sponge whilst staying at one of his many "free hotels"—Hanby House, the home of Mr. Puffington, Master of the Hanby, late Mangeysterne, fox-hounds.

In this particular instance, a certain Mr. Pacey, who was just about as green as Waffles, though far from being his equal in affluence, played the part of fly to Mr. Sponge's spider.

Pacey was a swaggering young puppy, who thought himself as smart and accomplished as anyone with whom he came in contact. He thought he could drink, thought he could ride, thought he could score off people, in fact do anything; whilst actually he was a soft, stupid, good-for-nothing popinjay.

In his cups one evening, when dining at Hanby House, he was inveigled into a transaction whereby he agreed to pay Mr. Sponge seventy pounds for his worthless horse, Multum-in-Parvo.

Next morning, as his fogged senses gradually cleared, and full realization of his overnight rashness came to him, Mr. Pacey became thoroughly alarmed, having neither the money to pay nor any desire to purchase the horse. Moreover, the situation was not improved by the untractable chestnut kicking his new owner over his head, as soon as friend Pacey took him into the park to try him out.

Finally, in desperation, the young man rushed off to his guardian, Major Screw, who eventually paid over to the irrepressible Soapey the sum of fifty pounds, in return for his agreement to cancellation of the deal!

Though Surtees has given us no information on the point, one can imagine Mr. Sponge's comment, on concluding this impudent fraud, being very similar to the contemptuous words used by him about Mr. Waffles, that such an ass deserved to be done.

Having shown up one of Mr. Sponge's worst characteristics—one indeed that would surely have landed a less crafty person perilously near the dock—it seems only fair that the one redeeming feature of his character, that is to say, his prowess in the hunting field, should next be reviewed.

Dressed for hunting, Mr. Sponge exhibited his undoubted preference for the strong, serviceable type of costume, capable of offering stout resistance to the stormiest weather and the stiffest of "bullfinches," rather than the somewhat

dandified apparel affected by many young bloods of the day. He wore the shorter type of scarlet hunting coat, finished with strong double stitching, white cords of a texture impervious to thorns, and boots with mahogany tops in preference to those of a much lighter shade, so popular in that era. His spurs were long and heavy, his hat as hard as iron, the whole workmanlike outfit being completed by a white stock, fastened with an enormous silver horse-shoe, which Surtees tells us was nearly large enough for a donkey!

Allusion has already been made to Mr. Sponge's praiseworthy effort at Laverick Wells, on the occasion of the drag, arranged by Mr. Waffles, when he went most gallantly on a strange horse, and had the satisfaction of pounding the whole field by jumping a wide brook, and thus turning the tables on his would-be discomforters.

Then, when hunting with Lord Scamperdale's hounds from Scrambleford Green, during his visit, or rather visitation, to a rival humbug, Mr. Jawleyford of Jawleyford Court, Mr. Sponge, after falling foul of his lordship, and his lordship's trumpeter-in-chief, Jack Spraggon, on account of the hard-pulling Hercules getting among the hounds, greatly distinguished himself in the run that followed. And when by misfortune and the scurviness of Lord Scamperdale, who deliberately omitted to warn him of the danger, Sponge suddenly found himself deep in a bog, he was well up with hounds after a gruelling gallop, and only his lordship and Frostyface, the huntsman, left to compete with.

'*"That's cooked your goose!"*' exclaimed his lordship, eyeing Sponge and his horse floundering about in the black porridge-like mess.'

'*"Nasty jealous old beggar!"*' said Sponge, eyeing his lessening lordship disappearing over the hill.'

It was towards the end of his season's campaigning that Mr. Sponge accepted the invitation of Sir Harry Scattercash, a drunken spendthrift, to stay at Nonsuch House and have a day with his hounds.

A bag-fox put down in the shrubbery provided the day's sport and, once again, our friend performed with the utmost distinction, this time on the erratic, unreliable Multum-in-Parvo. Starting indifferently, as soon as hounds were away, by smashing to smithereens the shrubbery gate, at which the star-gazing, wildly-charging chestnut never rose an inch, Mr. Sponge had to exert his powers of horsemanship to the full in order to gain some semblance of control over his iron-mouthed brute of a horse.

'*"Ah, ye brute!"*' groaned Mr. Sponge, in disgust, digging the Latchfords into his sides, as if he intended to make them meet in the middle. *"Ah, ye brute!"* repeated he, giving him a hearty cropper as he put up his head after trying to kick him off.'

Yet, instead of rib-roasting Multum-in-Parvo, Mr. Sponge should really have been grateful to him, because it was the gate-crashing episode that served as an introduction to the beautiful Miss Lucy Glitters, an old stage acquaintance of Lady Scattercash and a guest at Nonsuch House, who not long afterwards became Mrs. Sponge.

“Thank you!” exclaimed Miss Glitters, cantering up; adding, “you cleared the way nicely for me.”

On the far side of a three hundred acre park, the field was brought to a standstill by a high, rather forbidding-looking boundary fence, the hazards of charging it being considerably enhanced by the fact that a good deal of bone still remained in the ground following recent frost.

Old Watchorn, Sir Harry’s huntsman, who rarely jumped a stick if he could help it, and then only when well primed with liquor, showed obvious signs of alarm at the sight of so formidable an obstacle to his dignified, leisurely progress.

“Oh, the devil!” exclaimed Watchorn, pulling up short in a perfect agony of despair. “Oh, the devil!” repeated he in a lower tone, as Mr. Sponge approached.

Hounds were on, and there was no time for dallying.

“Where’s there a gate?” roared our friend, skating up.

“Gate! there’s never a gate within a mile, and that’s locked,” replied Watchorn, sulkily.

“Then here goes!” replied Mr. Sponge, gathering the chestnut together to give him an opportunity of purging himself of his previous *faux pas*. “Here goes!” repeated he, thrusting his hard hat firmly on his head. Taking his horse back a few paces, Mr. Sponge crammed him manfully at the palings, and got over with a rap.

“Well done you!” exclaimed Miss Glitters in delight; adding to Watchorn, “Now old Beardey, you go next.”

Beardey was irresolute. He pretended to be anxious to get the tail hounds over.

“Clear the way, then!” exclaimed Miss Glitters, putting her horse back, her bright eyes flashing as she spoke. She took him back as far as Mr. Sponge had done, touched him with the whip, and in an instant she was high in the air, landing safely on the far side.

Thus it came about that Soapey and Lucy got away together, with never a soul to share their enjoyment of the chase, or interrupt their growing mutual attachment.

Mr. Sponge, thereupon, took over the hunting of the hounds with Lucy to whip in to him, old Watchorn being left floundering far in the rear.

“Well, I never see’d sich a man as that!” exclaimed he, eyeing Mr. Sponge clearing a stiff flight of rails with a gap near at hand. “Nor woman nouter!” added he, as Miss Glitters did the like.

Our hero and heroine now found themselves confronted by an awkward-looking mill-stream with a stiff fence to them.

“Hold up!” roared Mr. Sponge, as having bored a hole through the fence, he found himself on the margin of the water-race. The horse did hold up, and landed him—not without a scramble—on the far side.

“Run him at it, Lucy!” exclaimed Mr. Sponge, turning his horse half round to his fair companion. “Run him at it, Lucy!” repeated he; and Lucy, fortunately hitting the gap, skimmed o’er the water like a swallow on a summer’s eve.

“Well done! *you’re a trump!*” exclaimed Mr. Sponge, standing in his stirrups, and holding on by the mane as his horse rose the opposing hill.’

Hereabouts, the line having been crossed by a flock of sheep, scent became patchy and hounds were in difficulties, necessitating the assistance of our amateur huntsman.

“Put ’em to me,” said Mr. Sponge, giving Miss Glitters his whip.’ He then proceeded to make a cast worthy of a professional, resulting in hounds recovering the line in fine style.

“*Forrard! forrard!*” screeched Mr. Sponge, capping the hounds on, when away they went, heads up and sterns down as before.’

‘But the time was close by when this good fox must die,’ and soon his death knell proclaimed the sealing of his fate.

Only Sponge and Lucy were there to see the end of this glorious run, in which both had gone so gallantly. But this was just as well, because, when presenting Lucy with the brush, our friend, taking advantage of their solitude, and quite overcome by her ravishing beauty, passionately embraced her as a prelude to their betrothal which was brought about on the way home.

Having established Mr. Sponge’s claim to distinction as a fox-hunter, and his reputation as a dashing, courageous horseman—that he was no sluggard where women were concerned has also been shown—we must now, in conscientious fulfilment of our character-sketching task, regretfully return to the consideration of his other less praiseworthy characteristics.

Mr. Sponge’s education, no details of which are revealed by Surtees, seems clearly to have been sketchy, to say the least of it, for he appears to have had neither the knowledge, nor the inclination, to converse on any subject other than hunting and horses, except, of course, during his evening flirtations.

True, he had learnt to speak his native tongue tolerably well, and knew how to dress himself like a gentleman, but his manners were boorish and, at times, anything but refined.

See him in the drawing-room, after dinner, on his first night at Jawleyford Court—an excellent billet as long as it lasted.

“May I give you tea or coffee?” asked Emily (the Jawleyfords’ younger daughter), in the sweetest tone possible, as she raised her finely turned gloveless arm towards where the glittering appendages stood on the large silver tray.’

“Neither, thank you,” said Sponge, throwing himself into an easy-chair beside Mrs. Jawleyford. He then crossed his legs, and cocking up a toe for admiration, began to yawn.’

“You’ll feel tired after your journey?” observed Mrs. Jawleyford.’

“No, I’m not,” said Sponge, yawning again—a good yawn this time.’

“I knew a family of your name,” at length observed Mrs. Jawleyford, in the simple sort of way women begin pumping men. “I knew a family of your name,” repeated she, seeing Sponge was half asleep—“the Sponges of Toadey Hall. Pray are they any relation of yours?”’

“Oh—ah—yes,” blurted Sponge, “I suppose they are. The fact is—the—haw

—Sponges—haw—are a rather large family—haw. Meet them almost everywhere.”

“Is yours a good hunting country?” asked Jawleyford, thinking to sound him in another way.

“No, a devilish bad ’un,” replied Sponge; adding with a grunt, “or I wouldn’t be here.”

Mr. Sponge beginning his nasal recreations, Mrs. Jawleyford motioned the ladies off to bed.

His taste in literature extended little further than *Bell’s Life in London*, and a curious pocket-sized book entitled *Mogg’s Ten Thousand Cab Fares*. This he was scarcely ever without, nor did he ever tire of studying its pages.

On the morning following Mr. Sponge’s descent upon Jawleyford Court, his very limited aspirations in the reading line at once became evident. It being a pouring wet day, his host inquired, ‘if he could amuse himself in the house.’

“Oh yes,” replied he, “got a book in my pocket.”

“Ah, I suppose—the *New Monthly*, perhaps?” observed Mr. Jawleyford.

“No,” replied Sponge.

“Dizzey’s *Life of Bentinck*, then I daresay,” suggested Jawleyford; adding, “I’m reading it myself.”

“No, nor that either,” replied Sponge, with a knowing look; “a much more useful work, I assure you,” added he, pulling the little purple-backed volume out of his pocket, and reading the gilt letters on the back; *Mogg’s Ten Thousand Cab Fares*, price one shilling!”

“Indeed,” exclaimed Mr. Jawleyford, “well, I should never have guessed that.”

“I daresay not,” replied Sponge, “it’s a book I never travel without. It’s invaluable in town, and you may study it to great advantage in the country.”

“Just so,” said Jawleyford, “just so. It must be a very useful work indeed, very useful work. I’ll get one. How much did you say it was—a guinea?”

“A *shilling*,” replied Sponge; adding, “you may have mine for a guinea if you like.”

Mention has been made of Mr. Sponge’s thick skin, but he was a good deal more than thick-skinned, for he completely ignored hints, even those of the broadest description, and impudently remained rooted in this or that house, despite the knowledge that he was no longer wanted, and every effort on the part of his hosts to be rid of him short of actually telling him to get out.

In the absence of Mr. Sponge, who was out hunting, Jawleyford, now rendered desperate by his guest’s prolonged visit, which showed no signs of coming to an end, and having become rather dubious as to the Sponge fortune at which rumour had hinted, exclaimed to his wife:

“It’s one thing to tell a man, if he comes your way, you’ll be glad to see him, and another to ask him to come bag and baggage, as this impudent Mr. Sponge has done.”

“Certainly,” replied Mrs. Jawleyford, who saw where the shoe was pinching her bear.’

“I wish he was off,” observed Jawleyford, after a pause. “He bothers me excessively—I’ll try and get rid of him by saying we are going from home.”’

“Where can you say we are going to?” asked Mrs. Jawleyford.’

“Oh, anywhere,” replied Jawleyford; “he doesn’t know the people about here: the Tewkesbury’s, the Woolerton’s, the Brown’s—anybody.”’

At this point, the subject of their discussion returned from hunting.

“Ah, my dear sir!” exclaimed Jawleyford, half gaily, half moodily, extending a couple of fingers as Sponge entered his study; “we thought you had taken French leave of us, and were off.”’

Sponge had been lying out in the hope of making up for his lost day when, with Jack Spraggon, he was left tucking in to Farmer Springwheat’s breakfast, while Lord Scamperdale, hoping to leave our friend in the lurch, found a fox and got away on his own.

Soapey now recounted this tale of woe to his host.

“Ah!” exclaimed Jawleyford, when he was done; “that’s a pity—great pity—monstrous pity—never knew anything so unlucky in my life.”’

“Misfortunes will happen,” replied Sponge, in a tone of unconcern.’

“Ah, it wasn’t so much the loss of the hunt I was thinking of,” replied Jawleyford, “as the arrangements we have made in consequence of thinking you were gone.”’

“What are they?” asked Sponge.’

“Why, my Lord Barker, a great friend of ours—known him from a boy—just like brothers in short—sent over this morning to ask us all there—shooting party, charades, that sort of thing—and we accepted.”’

“But that need make no difference,” replied Sponge; “I’ll go too.”’

‘Jawleyford was taken aback. He had not calculated upon so much coolness.’

“Well,” stammered he, “that might do, to be sure; but—if—I’m not quite sure that I could take any one——”’

“But if you’re as thick as you say, you can have no difficulty,” replied our friend.’

“True,” replied Jawleyford; “but then we go a large party ourselves—two and two’s four,” said he, “to say nothing of servants; besides, his lordship mayn’t have room—house will most likely be full.”’

“Oh, a single man can always be put up; shake-down—anything does for him,” replied Sponge.’

“But you would lose your hunting,” replied Jawleyford. “Barkington Tower is quite out of Lord Scamperdale’s country.”’

“That doesn’t matter,” replied Sponge; adding, “I don’t think I’ll trouble his lordship much more. These Flat Hat gentlemen* are not over and above civil in my opinion.”’

* Members of Lord Scamperdale’s Flat Hat Hunt.

“Well,” replied Jawleyford, nettled at this thwarting of his attempt, “that’s for your consideration. However, as you’ve come, I’ll talk to Mrs. Jawleyford, and see if we can get off the Barkington expedition.”

“But don’t get off on my account,” replied Sponge. “I can stay here quite well. I daresay you’ll not be away long.”

Poor Jawleyford, expert in the art of trickery as he was, might just as well have given up the unequal contest, for all the chance he had of getting the better of our rough-shod-riding friend, who seemed always to have a ready counter to every move of his opponents, scheme they never so craftily.

In the case of Jawleyford Court, as with other of his anchorages, the standard of hospitality extended to Mr. Sponge was gradually lowered when it became known that he was by no means all that he pretended to be. Jawleyford, albeit a great humbug himself, and having little to commend him, finding that ordinary, everyday hints were of no avail, went so far as to move his stubborn guest to an attic, wherein he was nearly asphyxiated by smoke as soon as the pretty maid had lighted the fire and been embraced by Sponge for her pains.

“What’s happened now?” asked our friend of the maid, putting his arm round her waist, and giving her a hearty squeeze. “What’s happened now, that you’ve put me into this dog-hole?” asked he.

“Oh! I don’t know,” replied she, laughing; “I s’pose they’re afraid you’ll bring the old rotten curtains down in the other room with smokin’. Master’s a sad old wife,” added she.

Another who became enmeshed in Mr. Sponge’s toils was the pompous, consequential Mr. Puffington, M.F.H., of Hanby House, whose particular delight was self-advertisement.

Believing Mr. Sponge to be a sporting journalist—a sort of miniature Nimrod in fact—Puffington, foreseeing publication of glowing tributes to his hounds, his horses, his hospitality, and above all to himself, warmly welcomed our friend, horses and all, within his gates. But before long he, like all the rest of Soapey’s hosts, bitterly regretted his temerity.

Egged on by Jack Spraggon, Sponge did actually endeavour to keep up the illusion by writing an account of a run with the Hanby hounds, though, in reality, the greater part of it was composed by Jack. But passing through the hands of a lady editor (Miss Grimes), who found some difficulty in reading Sponge’s scrawl and, having no knowledge of hunting, could only interpret the doubtful words as she thought best, besides making one or two alterations which she regarded as improvements, the article became so mangled as to be a burlesque of the original, and, far from pleasing Puffington as intended, threw him into an agony of despair at the ridicule that must inevitably result.

For instance, Miss Grimes thought the words “exquisite perfume” infinitely more telling, and rather more refined, than “ravishing scent”!

So it was now Puffington’s turn to try his hand at uprooting Mr. Sponge, for whom he had no further use since learning of his responsibility for the article. But he, of course, found it no easier than the previous victim, Jawleyford, had done.

Feigning illness, and staying in his room, Mr. Puffington learned from his butler, Plummey, that Sponge was still there.

“Is he going to-day?” asked he.

“No, sir—I daresay not, sir,” replied Mr. Plummey. “His man—his groom—his—whatever he calls him, expects they’ll be staying some time.”

“The *deuce*!” exclaimed Mr. Puffington, whose hospitality, like Jawleyford’s, was greater in imagination than in reality.

“Couldn’t you manage to get him to go?” asked Mr. Puffington.

“Don’t know, sir. I could try, sir—believe he’s bad to move, sir,” replied Plummey, with a grin.

“Well,” said Mr. Puffington, “I wish you would try to get rid of him, bow him out civilly, you know—say I’m unwell—very unwell—deuced unwell—ordered to keep quiet—say it as if from yourself, you know—it mustn’t appear as if it came from me, you know.”

Presently the butler sounded Mr. Sponge.

“Beg pardon, sir,” said Plummey, “but cook, sir, wishes to know, sir, if you dine here to-day, sir?”

“Of course,” replied Mr. Sponge, “where would you have me dine?”

“Oh, I didn’t know, sir—only Mr. Puffington, sir, is very poorly, sir, and I thought p’r’aps you’d be dining out. Then I must say you’ll dine here?” said the butler.

“Yes; I must have my dinner, of course,” replied Mr. Sponge. “I’m not ill, you know; no occasion to make a great spread for me, you know; but still I must have some victuals, you know.”

“Certainly, sir, certainly,” replied Mr. Plummey.

“I couldn’t think of leaving Mr. Puffington when he’s poorly,” observed Mr. Sponge.

And that was the end of it—another victory for the all-conquering Sponge. It was not a bit of good appealing to his sense of propriety, his sense of decency, his sense of shame, for the simple reason that he was not the happy possessor of any of these qualities.

Similar difficulty was experienced by Mr. Jogglebury Crowdey in getting rid of our adhesive friend, whom he, or rather Mrs. Jog, had rashly invited to their comfortable, if less pretentious home, Puddingpote Bower, in the mistaken belief that their guest was a man of wealth and might make an admirable godfather for Gustavus James, the latest importation to an already over-stocked nursery.

Jog, as his wife called him, was a short, pot-bellied little man, full of importance and inordinately fussy. He suffered from perpetual puffing and blowing, seeming to be always out of breath whether moving or stationary, and had a mania for fashioning the nobs of sticks into representations of the heads of famous men.

Mr. Sponge had long since outstayed his welcome, when, early one morning, Jog tried the expedient of loudly shouting to the maid, Mary Ann, to hurry up with breakfast as he thought their guest would be leaving.

“Oh, Murry Ann,” bellowed Mr. Jog, at the top of his voice, “Oh, Murry

Ann, you'd better get the (puff) breakfast ready; I think the (gasp) Mr. Sponge will be (wheezing) away to-day." "

"*Will he,*" said Mr. Sponge to himself.'

"Wish you may get it, old boy," added he, tucking the now backless "Mogg" under his pillow, and turning over for a snooze.'

Surtees was able to record one instance, however, of Mr. Sponge leaving a refuge without the incentive of deliberate persuasion.

In fact his departure was the last thing his host, Mr. Facey Romford, wanted, for on the previous evening he had won a matter of seven pound ten from his guest at *écarté*, and the guest being our friend Soapey, the money, needless to say, had not been paid.

Mr. Sponge's hurried exit, on that memorable occasion, was due not only to his determination to avoid payment, but also to the extreme discomfort he had suffered during the night, in his ineffectual attempts to sleep in what was little better than a box, densely populated by ravenous vermin.

"The chest contrived a double debt to pay—
A bed by night, a chest of drawers by day." "

Romford, if a good deal rougher both in appearance, manner and habits than Sponge, was a man of very much the same kidney, for whilst being utterly unscrupulous, cunning, everlastingly intent on the main chance, and bad to beat in a bargain, he was withal a strong, capable horseman and a rare thruster in the hunting field.

The upshot of this, their first battle of wits, a quality in which neither was deficient, might be said to have been a 'draw,' for whereas Facey won the money—if honestly, none of his acquaintances would have suspected it—Soapey succeeded in getting away without paying.

"Glad to see ye!" exclaimed Facey, swinging Sponge's arm to and fro.' "Axed Nosey Nickel and Gutty Weazel to meet you," continued he, looking at the little "dinner-for-two" table; "but Nosey's gone wrong in a tooth, and Gutty's away sweetheartin'. However, we'll be very cozey and jolly together; and if you want to wash your hands, or anything afore dinner, I'll show you your bed-room," continued he.'

"There! there are your traps. Yonder's the washhand-stand. You can put your shavin'-things on the chair below the lookin'-glass 'gainst the wall," pointing to a fragment of glass nailed against the stencilled wall.'

Sponge's consternation, as he caught sight of the diminutive bed, provoked Facey to exclaim:

"Oh, fiddle! Jack Weatherley slept in it for months, and he's half a hand higher than you—sixteen hands, if he's an inch. W-h-o-y, ar thought you'd been a fox-hunter." "

"Well, but bein' a fox-hunter won't enable one to sleep in a band-box, or to shut one's-self up like a telescope," retorted the indignant Sponge.'

"Ord hang it, man! you're so nasty partickler," rejoined Facey. "You'll never do to go out duck-shootin' i' your shirt." "

After a substantial but unappetizing dinner, followed by excruciating noises on a flute, produced by Facey in a laudable desire to entertain his guest; the acquiring by Romford of his I.O.U. for seven pound ten; and, on top of all this, a wretched night; Mr. Sponge's reflections, as he lay in his "little ease," before getting up and stretching his cramped limbs, were anything but happy.

"Well, dash my buttons!" groaned Sponge, "but this is the worst spec I ever made in my life. Fed on pork, fluted deaf, bit with bugs, and robbed at cards—fairly, downrightly robbed. Never was a more reg'ler plant put on a man. Thank goodness, however, I haven't paid him—never will, either. Such a confounded, disreputable scoundrel deserves to be punished—big, bad, blackguard-looking fellow!"

"Well, old Sivin-Pund-Ten, how goes it?" asked Facey, shouting through the flimsy partition separating their rooms.

"You be ——!" growled Mr. Sponge, in disgust.

"Breakfast in half an hour!" resumed Facey. "Pigs'-puddin's and sarsingers—all 'ot—pipin' 'ot!" continued our host.

"Wish you were pipin' 'ot," growled Mr. Sponge, as he jerked himself out of his little berth.

By way of showing how prone was Mr. Sponge to get himself into trouble—partly through misfortune, and partly owing to the vagaries of his horses, or rather Mr. Benjamin Buckram's screws—allusion must, now, be made to our friend's unfortunate tendency to come into conflict with the irascible master of the Flat Hat Hunt, the Right Honourable, the Earl of Scamperdale.

His very first day from Jawleyford Court brought down upon him the wrath of the noble Earl.

Delayed, as fox-hunters, staying in non-hunting houses, so often are, by a belated breakfast, as well as by difficulties experienced in finding his way in a strange country, Mr. Sponge—"publish it not in the streets of Askelon"—headed the fox.

"I wish I mayn't ketch it," said Sponge to himself, shuddering at the idea of having headed him.

But as Surtees rightly records: 'Though Sponge was in the road, he well knew that no one has any business anywhere but with hounds, when a fox is astir.'

"Hold hard!" was now the cry, and the perspiring riders and lathered steeds came to a stand-still.

"Oh, d——n me! that man in the lane's headed the fox," puffed one.

"Come on a cow," observed another. (Mr. Sponge was riding the piebald hack.)

At length, as hounds recovered the line, Mr. Sponge, exchanging his hack for Multum-in-Parvo, decided that, despite his grievous crime, he would go on. Indeed, it would have taken a good deal more than Lord Scamperdale's wrath to induce him to turn away when hounds were running.

"Now or never," said he. "Hang it! I may as well see the run."

Unfortunately, it was what Surtees has described as 'one of Multum-in-Parvo's going days,' and before long Mr. Sponge found himself being remorselessly trans-

ported to the very forefront of the field, the chestnut having taken the bit in his teeth and complete charge of his rider.

“Why, here’s the man on the cow!” said Jack Spraggon, his lordship’s henchman.

By this time, the hard-striving but helpless Soapey was fast overhauling Frostyface, the huntsman.

“Hold hard, sir! For God’s sake, hold hard!” screamed Frosty.

“Hold hard, sir!” roared he, as, yawning and boring and shaking his head, Parvo dashed through the now yelping scattered pack, making straight for a stiff new gate, which he smashed through, just as a circus pony smashes through a paper hoop.

“Thank you, Mr. Brown Boots!” exclaimed his lordship, as, by dint of biting and spurring, Sponge at length worked the beast round, and came sneaking back in the face of the whole field.

“Thank you, Mr. Brown Boots,” repeated he, taking off his hat and bowing very low.

“Very much obleged to you, Mr. Brown Boots. Most particklarly obleged to you, Mr. Brown Boots,” with another low bow. “Hang’d obleged to you, Mr. Brown Boots! D——n *you*, Mr. Brown Boots!” continued his lordship, looking at Sponge as if he would eat him.

“Beg pardon, sir,” blurted Sponge; “my horse——”

“Hang your horse!” screamed his lordship; “it wasn’t your horse that headed the fox, was it?”

“Beg pardon—couldn’t help it; I——”

“Couldn’t help it. Hang your helps. You could stay at home, sir—I s’pose, sir—couldn’t you, sir? eh, sir?”

“See, sir!” continued his lordship, pointing to the mute pack now following the huntsman, “you’ve lost us our fox, sir—*yes*, sir—lost us our fox, sir. D’ye call that nothin’, sir? If you don’t, *I* do, you perpendicular-looking Puseyite pig-jobber! By Jove! you think because I’m a lord, and can’t swear or use coarse language, that you may do what you like—but I’ll take my hounds home, sir—yes, sir, I’ll take my hounds home, sir.”

So saying, his lordship roared *HOME* to Frostyface; adding, in an undertone to the first whip, “*bid him go to Furzing-field gorse.*”

A repetition of this depressing occurrence, though attended by even worse consequences, must regretfully be recorded.

Mr. Sponge was again late, and again he committed that most atrocious of hunting crimes—heading the fox. And to make matters worse, Multum-in-Parvo took it into his head to bolt. Finally, after Sponge had succeeded in getting him round, he charged straight at Lord Scamperdale.

Great was the collision! His lordship flew one way, his horse another, his hat a third, his whip a fourth, his spectacles a fifth; in fact, he was scattered all over. In an instant he lay in the centre of a circle, kicking on his back like a lively turtle.

“Oh! I’m kilt!” he roared, striking out as if he was swimming, or rather floating. “I’m kilt!” he repeated. “He’s broken my back,—he’s broken my legs,—he’s broken my ribs,—he’s broken my collar-bone,—he’s knocked my right eye into the heel of my left boot. Oh! will nobody catch him and kill him? Will nobody do for him? Will you see an English nobleman knocked about like a nine-pin?” added his lordship, scrambling up to go in pursuit of Mr. Sponge himself, exclaiming, as he stood shaking his fist at him, “*Rot ye; Sir! hangin’s too good for ye! you should be condemned to hunt in Berwickshire the rest of your life!*”

Of Mr. Sponge’s heiress-hunting activities, we are not told a great deal. But we do know that he, at one time, entertained high hopes of one or other of the Jawleyford girls, Amelia and Emily, completely bamboozled as he then was by Jawleyford’s fine display and humbugging pretence of great wealth.

His reflections, as he sat before a roaring fire in the best bedroom at Jawleyford Court, on the first night of his visit, lounging in a comfortable armchair, smoking a cigar, leave no room for doubt as to his ambitions.

“Well, I think he’ll do,” said our friend to himself.

“He has money,” mused Sponge, between the copious whiffs of the cigar, “splendid style he lives in, to be sure” (puff), continued he, after another long draw.

“Two men in livery” (puff), “one out, can’t be done for nothing” (puff). “What a profusion of plate, too!” (whiff)—“declare I never” (puff) “saw such” (whiff, puff) “magnificence in the whole course of my” (whiff, puff) “life.”

“Great house—great establishment—great estate, doubtless. Why, confound it,” continued he, casting his heavy eye lazily around, “here’s a room as big as a field in a cramped country! Can’t have less than fifty thousand a-piece, I should say, at the least.” (This was a guess at the fortunes of the two girls.)

Curiously enough, whilst Mr. Sponge was indulging in these speculations, Mr. and Mrs. Jawleyford, in the seclusion of their own room, were debating whether their guest had fifty or a hundred thousand a year!

But disillusionment, as we know, was the lot of both aspiring parties.

Meagre record also exists of some of Mr. Sponge’s previous ventures in the matrimonial market, money, as usual, being the chief consideration in each case. There were, for instance, Miss Trickesy; the beautiful and richly endowed Miss Rainbow; and a wealthy widow from the north, whose name, however, has been discreetly withheld. Failure, unfortunately for our friend, attended all these efforts, in which, it can only be surmised, his customary powers of deception were not working at full pressure.

Still, he must be given credit that his mercenary proclivities were not proof against Lucy’s superb beauty, and had he stuck to her instead of bolting to Australia, after frittering away the profits of their cigar shop, and leaving poor Lucy high and dry, more might have been said in his favour. But with Soapey it was self first, last and always, without a spark of compassion or consideration for others. In fact almost the only value attaching to his character would seem to be its worth as a warning and a deterrent.

Although Sponge and Lucy eventually made it up—against Soapey's desertion, Lucy's sojourn with Facey Romford at Beldon Hall* must be thrown into the scales—resuming normal relations as man and wife in Australia, and fortune seemed to be favouring them, no one could imagine that Mr. Sponge continued to be anything to the end of *his* chapter, other than the thorough-going villain he remained to the end of *ours*.

* See Chapter VI.

CHAPTER III

MISERRIMUS DOLEFUL

(References are to *Handley Cross*.)

THE claims of Miserrimus Doleful to a place in our team of Surtees characters must be acknowledged, if only because it was he who engineered the installation of Mr. Jorrocks as master of the Handley Cross fox-hounds. And although his position in the batting order may seem, at a glance, to be incommensurate with the degree of fame, or should we say notoriety, attaching to his name, it must be remembered that a captain does not always put his best batsmen in early.

Still, it cannot be denied that 'frind Miserrimus,' as Mr. Jorrocks was wont to allude to him, played a conspicuous and enthusiastic part in the activities of Handley Cross Spa, a fashionable watering-place and hunting centre.

Captain Miserrimus Doleful, to give him his full title, was a retired militia officer, with a small private income, which he sought to augment by establishing himself as Master of Ceremonies at Handley Cross, and putting out subscription lists in the libraries and similarly frequented parts of the town.

Tall and abnormally thin, with long spindle shanks almost entirely innocent of flesh or muscle, he was a regular scarecrow of a man, a simile that was enhanced by his colourless, deeply-lined face, his unkempt head of greying dark hair, and his straggly, untrimmed whiskers.

Altogether, so unprepossessing was his appearance, that had there been any competition for the mastership of the Handley Cross ceremonies, his bid for power could hardly have proved successful. As it was, however, he not only invented the job, but precluded the possibility of rival claims to the position, by appropriating it to himself before anyone had the chance of competing, or was even aware of its existence.

Although a bachelor, with no one but himself to provide for, he was mean with money, and pinched and scraped to such an extent that he was able to indulge his mania for saving. For instance, rather than buy a hunting coat, he had his old militia tunic converted into a garment, whose semblance to the correct article rested solely in its approach to the proper colour. Indeed, his clothes, generally, bore the stamp of seediness, being crumpled, darned or dirty, or even, on occasions, crumpled, darned *and* dirty.

Yet, in his office as Master of the Ceremonies, so greatly sought after were his favours by aspiring climbers of the fashionable spa, that it mattered little or nothing to them if his appearance was not all it might have been.

But if he enjoyed certain powers that the position gave him, he was soon to



Captain Miserrimus Doleful on the steps of Miss Jelly's shop where he lodged

find that it also involved many troubles and perplexities. Chief of these, perhaps, and one sufficiently alarming to scare the stoutest of hearts, arose through the probability of Mrs. Jorrocks, as wife of the M.F.H., expecting to be regarded as the leading lady of Handley Cross, a position hitherto held, undisputed, by a certain Mrs. Barnington, whose husband had had a hand in the management, or rather mis-management, of the hounds. And as the reigning "queen," a very great lady in her own estimation, had no intention of relinquishing her "crown" to a newcomer, whoever she might be, the stage was set for a grand flare-up, which only the exercise of much ingenuity and tact could possibly avert.

To poor Miserrimus, as self-appointed Master of the Ceremonies, fell the task of smoothing the troubled waters. And no light task it proved to be.

Thus, shortly before the Jorrockian invasion, we find our simpering, grinning friend summoned to the presence of the high and mighty Mrs. Barnington, of whom, it must be mentioned, he was greatly in awe.

It should, here, be explained that, as an alternative to his customary mournful, dying-duck-in-a-thunderstorm expression, he affected, especially when under stress of agitation, an exceedingly unattractive grin, rather reminiscent of a gargoyle.

"Good morning, Captain," said Mrs. Barnington, a dark, good-looking woman, who was reclining languorously on a sofa in a sumptuously furnished boudoir. "Pray, what is the meaning of all this to do about a Mr. Horrocks, that I read of in the *Paul Pry*?"

"Oh," replied the Captain, now blushing to the very tips of his ears, "you've mistaken the name, marm. Yes, marm—It's *Jorrocks*, marm—Mister Jorrocks of Great Coram Street, marm—a merchant prince, marm—at least his father was. The present Mr. Jorrocks is a mighty sportsman, and hearing the hounds were without a leader, he wrote to offer himself, and some of the sporting gentry of the place have been in treaty with him to take them; but I need not tell you, Mrs. Barnington, that hunting is not an amusement I am partial to, indeed I hope I may never have occasion to go out again; but you know that as Master of the Ceremonies I am obliged to countenance many things that I would gladly avoid."

"True," replied Mrs. Barnington, with a smile of approbation—"I thought *you* would not be likely to encourage vulgar people coming here merely because they don't care for breaking their necks over hedges and ditches—but tell me, isn't there a Mrs. Jorrocks?"

"I understand so," replied the Captain with a hem and a haw; "a lady of birth, they say; but had I known you would have interested yourself in the matter, I should certainly have informed myself so as to have been able to tell you all about her."

"Oh dear no! *not for the world!*—whether as a lady of birth or a tradesman's wife, it would never do for *me* to concern myself about them. *You* know my position here is not to be controverted by any interlopers, be they who they may,—or come from where they will."

"Undoubtedly not, marm," replied the obsequious M.C., "there's not a person in the place insensible of the advantages of your presence."

And so he went on, humbugging, flattering, and trying to pretend that he had only a superficial interest in the Jorrocks's arrival, and that he, personally, had had nothing to do with the arrangements. Whereas, in reality, he had been instrumental in pressing Mr. Jorrocks to accept the mastership of the Handley Cross hounds, and had actually been responsible for the elaborate arrangements for his reception that very day.

In truth, no one could have envied him the role of buffer between two women, vying with one another for supremacy. Rather was he deserving of sympathy in his desperate, if ineffectual, efforts to keep the peace and to please both.

Doleful, as he himself freely admitted to Mrs. Barnington, was not by any manner of means a fox-hunting enthusiast, and his somewhat painful experience on the disastrous day, which finally broke up the committee of management and led to the invitation being sent to Mr. Jorrocks, did nothing to bring about a revulsion of feeling on the subject.

On that unforgettable occasion, our retired Captain of Militia made one of his rare appearances at a meet of the hounds, when, to the consternation of Mrs. Barnington and the unbridled amusement of the young lady spectators from the rival establishments presided over, respectively, by Miss Prim and Miss Prosy, he was most cruelly bumped about on the brass fittings of an old military saddle, by a job mare who had as little liking for being kept waiting about in the cold as she had for Doleful's long heel spurs, which he dug into her sides in his desperate efforts to keep his seat, very much in the manner of a cat, instinctively extending its claws in order to get a firm grip!

Poor Miserrimus, having no notion of what to do or how to do it, could think of nothing but hanging on for dear life, leaving the mare to kick and plunge as she pleased, and, of course, the more he seared her with his spurs, the higher went her heels. Hat, whip, reins and stirrup-irons—all had gone before the mare could be caught, by which time our unhappy friend, who had been tossed backwards and forwards between two exceedingly hard and unyielding surfaces, to wit the brass-bound cantle and pommel of his old parade saddle, now firmly gripped with both hands, was within an ace of being finally pitched, neck and crop, over the old mare's head. This indignity our Master of Ceremonies was spared in the nick of time, and the impromptu entertainment afforded the giggling pupils of the Misses Prim and Prosy was thus brought to a close.

Mr. Jorrocks evidently got quite a wrong impression of Doleful from his letters, judging from a comment he made on receiving one of them—

“Doleful must be a trump—feel as if I knew him. Keen fellow too—peep-of-day boy.” Moreover, on the day of Mr. Jorrocks's first meeting with Doleful, the latter continued the deception.

“You'll be desperation fond of 'untin' I s'pose,” observed Mr. Jorrocks.

“It's the only thing worth living for in my mind,” replied Captain Doleful.

Then, a day or two after his arrival at Handley Cross, the new M.F.H. made the following entry in his journal:

‘ “Wonder Doleful don’t ride out. Keen sportsman like him, one would think would like to see the ’ounds.” ’

But the Captain cunningly excused himself to Mr. Jorrocks by saying:

‘ “The fact is, I only hunt on the sly. If the dowagers thought I did not devote my whole time and energies to the town amusements, they would grumble and say I was always out hunting, instead of attending to the important duties of my post.” ’

In addition to Doleful’s distaste for the sport, his ignorance of the subject, considering that he lived at a hunting centre, and was surrounded by people who hunted, was almost unbelievable.

Furthermore, his anxiety to promote fox-hunting at Handley Cross was prompted solely by the knowledge that it would bring more people to the spa, help to popularize it, and so achieve his main object by bringing more grist to *his* mill. He did not set about the task of getting a new master for the hounds, and enter into a lengthy correspondence with Mr. Jorrocks on the matter, because he loved hunting. No, he would gladly have abolished it, and thus rid himself, once and for all, of the pain and grief inseparable from his rare appearances in the hunting field, were it not for its undoubted pecuniary advantages.

Doleful’s ignorance of all matters pertaining to hunting could not, perhaps, be more clearly demonstrated than by reference to the letters that passed between himself and Mr. Jorrocks, immediately preceding the latter’s acceptance of the mastership of the hounds.

For instance, before replying to some of Mr. Jorrocks’s inquiries, our sporting Captain made these rather startling comments:

‘ “What does he mean by ‘are they steady?’—‘are they musical?’ and as to the ‘stopping being expensive,’ of course that must depend a good deal upon how he lives, and whether he stops at an inn or not.” ’

Then in his letter, alluding to the hounds, he wrote: ‘ “They are very steady and most musical. Their airing yard adjoins the Ebenezer chapel, and when the saints begin to sing, the dogs join chorus.” ’

When, on his arrival, Mr. Jorrocks asked: ‘ “What sort of fencin’ have you?” ’ Doleful replied: ‘ “Fencing, why we’ve had none, I think, since the theatre closed.” ’ ‘ “*Humph!*” mused Mr. Jorrocks,’ continuing the game of cross questions and crooked answers, ‘ “that’s queer—never knew a play-actor in my life with the slightest turn for ’untin’.” ’

These quotations should suffice to show the limitations of our peep-of-day boy, in knowledge of matters relating to the sport which he declared to Mr. Jorrocks was “the only thing worth living for”!

Nor was he any better acquainted with the subject of horses, for when writing to Mr. Jorrocks about the possibility of making him an offer for his horse Xerxes, he said: ‘ “On a close examination of his countenance, I perceive sundry grey hairs scattered about:—is not this symptomatic of age?” ’ An astonishing statement which brought forth the following characteristic postscript to Mr. Jorrocks’s reply:

‘ “P.S.—Grey ’airs is nothin’. I’ve seen ’em all grey afore now.” ’

If not deliberately fraudulent—unless obtaining Mr. Jorrocks’s consent to pay

four guineas a week for Diana Lodge, the rent of which was only three guineas, can so be described—Miserrimus was undoubtedly entitled to a prominent position among Surtees's collection of humbugs, besides being an unscrupulous deceiver, and a shameless perverter of the truth. No lie or deception could be too base for his use, if it served as a means of getting what he wanted.

For example, there was his impudent invention of a rival candidate for the mastership, conceived as a means of cutting short Mr. Jorrocks's rather embarrassing questions, and with the object of inducing him, through fear of the rival, to close with the offer without further argument or delay.

“Yours is just received,” wrote he to Mr. Jorrocks. “I was on the point of writing to you when it came. A rival has appeared for the mastership of the hounds: a great Nabob with a bad liver, to whom the doctors have recommended strong horse-exercise, has arrived with four posters, and an influential party is desirous of getting the hounds for him. Money is evidently no object—he gave each post-boy a half-sovereign, and a blind beggar two and sixpence. I have protested most strongly against his being even *thought* of until your final decision is known, which pray give immediately, and, for your sake, let it be in the affirmative. I can write no more—my best energies shall be put in requisition to counteract the sinister proceedings of others.”

To which old Jorrocks replied, doubtless with his tongue in his cheek:

“I doesn't wish to disparage the value of your Nabob, but this I may say, that no man with a bad liver will ever make a good 'untsman. An 'untsman, or M.F.H., should have a good digestion, with a cheerful countenance, and, moreover, should know when to use the clean and when the dirty side of his tongue—when to butter a booby, and when to snub a snob.”

Alluding to the fictitious Nabob in a subsequent letter, the now desperate Master of Ceremonies wrote:

“And this leads me to tell you that the Nabob has been to the kennel, attended by two negroes, one of whom held a large green parasol over his head to protect him from the sun, while the other carried a Chinchilla, fur-lined, blue silk cloak to guard him from the cold. I hear he talked very big about tiger-hunting and elephant-riding, and said the waters here had done his liver a vast deal of good. I may observe that it is possible an attempt may be made by a few troublesome fellows to place him at the head of the establishment, particularly if you any longer delay appearing among us.”

Equally impudent was Doleful's pretence that his overtures to Mr. Jorrocks, about purchasing the horse Xerxes, were made on behalf of a certain Miss Lucretia Learmouth, whereas in reality he wanted the horse himself, and sought to get him cheap by appealing to our master's well-known gallantry where women were concerned.

Sure enough, this bare-faced artifice did have the effect of inducing Jorrocks to make a slight reduction in figure, for in his reply to Doleful's feeler, he wrote: “What say you to five-and-twenty guineas? If Lucretia's young and 'andsome, I'll take punds, if not I must 'ave the guineas.”

To this, the shameless Miserrimus replied: ‘ “Miss Lucretia is young and beautiful! Left an almost unprotected orphan, I feel deeply interested in her welfare, which I am sure will be participated in by you when you have the pleasure of her acquaintance. Twenty-five pounds seems a great sum for a horse confessedly not first-rate—could you not soften it a little? Fifteen, I should think, considering the circumstances, ought to buy him. He is not handsome—Lucretia is *beautiful!*” ’

At length, after more correspondence, in which the cheese-paring Doleful tried hard to get a bit clipped off, while our thoroughly business-like, wide-awake old grocer stuck to his guns and refused to give an inch, Miserrimus, realizing the hopelessness of continuing the struggle, decided to dispense with further use of the imaginary lady as bait, and wrote to Mr. Jorrocks in these terms:

‘ “I have just received yours, and regret to inform you that Miss Lucretia Learmouth has been suddenly called into Scotland by the alarming illness of a beloved relative, whereby all occasion for a horse is, of course, done away with. The difficulty of making this announcement is, however, relieved by the circumstance of my willingness to place myself in her shoes; I therefore beg to say, I shall be glad to take the horse, provided, of course, he is all right, etc.” ’

‘ “I’m sorry Lucretia’s gone,” ’ wrote Mr. Jorrocks in reply. ‘ “I should have liked to have had a look at her. I’m a great admirer o’ beauty in all its branches, and would always rayther give a shillin’ to look at a pretty woman than at a panorama. Howsomever, never mind, the ’oss is yours, and you may hand over the dibs to James Pigg, who will give you a receipt, and all that sort of thing. Charming weather for bees. Do they make much ’oney about you?” ’

Having acquired the luckless Xerxes, Doleful proceeded to work him, both under the saddle and in harness, literally to death, and then had the effrontery to demand his money back, claiming that poor honest old Jorrocks had sold him a worthless horse.

‘ “When I opened the negotiation with you respecting your rubbishing good-for-nothing horse,” ’ wrote he to Jorrocks, ‘ “I thought that in dealing with the Master of the Handley Cross fox-hounds, I had some guarantee that I was dealing with a gentleman. I grieve to find I was mistaken in my conjecture. I now demand a return of the money I paid for your nasty diseased horse, which an honest English jury will award me in the event of a refusal.” ’

But if ‘frind Miserrimus’ imagined, for one moment, he was going to get any change out of so experienced a man of business as John Jorrocks, he must have had a rude shock on receiving the brief, but unmistakable, reply :

‘ “I doesn’t know nothin’ wot an honest English jury may do for you, but this I knows, *I’ll do nothin’*. Zounds, man! you must be mad—mad as a hatter! P.S. Let’s have no more nonsense.” ’

Finally, what of this curious character’s relations with the opposite sex. Although not averse to a mild flirtation, our cautious friend would usually abstain from any attempt to advance beyond that stage, until he had assured himself that matrimony would bring with it a substantial dowry.

Some eight or ten years prior to his Handley Cross activities, he had met at Willoughby Baths a Miss Crabstick. She was a good deal older than Doleful, but this mattered not to our gallant Captain, once he had satisfied himself of her undoubted wealth. From that moment, in the inimitable words of Surtees, he 'poured forth his whole soul in mercenary adoration.' But Miss Crabstick proved to be stubborn, and although she seems to have decided that Miserrimus, as a husband, would be better than no husband at all, she did not, at that time, despair of finding someone, less devoid of attractions than the grinning gargoyle.

Her quest, however, in a succession of watering places, failed in its objective, and, at last, resigning herself to the inevitable, she drew up a will in Doleful's favour, turned her face to the wall, and quietly died.

But so much time had elapsed since the ex-Captain of Militia had laid siege to Miss Crabstick's heart at Willoughby Baths, that he had almost forgotten her, when she was suddenly brought back to his memory by a lawyer's letter informing him of his great good fortune.

Hearing of this windfall, Mrs. Jorrocks determined to try to arrange a match between Doleful and their pretty niece Belinda, and to cast off poor Charley Stobbs, who, for some time, had been Belinda's beau. Miserrimus declared himself to be willing, on learning that Belinda would have money, but no persuasion that Mrs. Jorrocks could muster had the smallest effect on her niece who, besides being contemptuous of Doleful, insisted on remaining steadfastly loyal to Stobbs, her one and only love.

The climax of these negotiations, with Mrs. Jorrocks and Captain Doleful on the one side and poor Belinda on the other, was reached when Mr. Jorrocks, escorted by his friend Bowker and Charley Stobbs, returning home unexpectedly from the asylum, where he had most outrageously been lodged, found our friend Doleful dining with his wife and niece.

Surtees thus describes the scene:

"'Now,'" said he (Mr. Jorrocks), producing his sneak-key as he spoke, "we'll give 'em an agreeable surprise.'" 'Having arrived at the Great Coram Street door, he gently opened the latch, and motioning them to enter on tiptoe, as quietly closed the door after him. There was a solitary candle in the passage, and a strong smell of dinner below. Knives and forks were going in the parlour. He gently opened the door. There sat Mrs. Jorrocks, in a fine red and gold turban, at the top of the table, Belinda with her back to the door, and Captain Doleful in the host's chair, in the act of diving a fork into the breast of a boiled turkey.'

"'Hulloa! you old bald-faced baboon!'" roared Mr. Jorrocks, an exclamation that caused Captain Doleful to drop his fork, his whiskers to fall from his face,* and Mrs. Jorrocks to swoon on the floor.'

Now Jorrocks, being a firm supporter of Stobbs for the hand of the lovely Belinda, put a very decided stopper on Mrs. J.'s scheming, so that the gallant, but luckless, Captain again found himself dropped.

The next and, so far as we know, last of Doleful's attempted speculations in

* Doleful had smartened himself up for the occasion with false whiskers.

the marriage market concerned a Miss Letitia Brantinghame, a penniless, debt-encumbered niece of our old friend Sir Archey Depecarde, who felt it his duty to palm her off on anyone he could find, sufficiently soft and unwary as to be taken in.

Although usually so cautious, Doleful, on this occasion, paid such marked and prolonged attention to the lady, that her mother, whose patience had at last become completely exhausted, determined to bring him to book.

So one day, instead of discussing the weather, or bombarding the gallant soldier with rather tactless questions, as for instance, whether he had been at Waterloo, Mama went straight to the point.

“Good morning, my dear Captain,” said Mrs. Brantinghame, extending her two forefingers for a salute, a sort of instalment of what he might get if he was a good boy; “Good morning, my dear Captain. Louisa Letitia will be down presently. But before she comes,” added she, in a lower tone, “I should like to have a few words with you,” motioning the taken-aback Captain to a seat on the sofa by her side.’

“You see, my dear (hem) Captain,” recommenced she, *sotto voce*, as soon as he got settled, “you see, my dear Captain,” repeated she, with one of those nasty dry coughs with which old women generally preface their unpleasantness, “you see, my dear Captain,” added she for the third time, “though of course I’m extremely (hem) happy and (cough) pleased to see you (hem) here whenever you (cough—hem) like to come, yet the (hem) world is censorious, and when a (cough) young gentleman [if he *had* been at Waterloo he could not have been much under sixty] comes so often to the house where there is a (hem) young lady, ill-natured people will (cough) talk, and”—here she had recourse to her kerchief.’

After a good deal more of this sort of stuff, interspersed with tearful interludes on the part of the lady, Doleful, at length, found himself obliged to make reply.

“I’m sure, marm (hem)—I’m sure, marm (cough)—I’m sure, marm (sneeze)—I am certainly—I may say undoubtedly—deeply—that is to say sincerely—sincerely, that is to say deeply—attached—to your very elegant and aimiable, that is to say, aimiable and elegant daughter, and I flatter myself—that is to say I have reason to believe—that your lovely and beautiful daughter—that is to say aimiable—and (cough) accomplished daughter is equally attached to me.”’

But soon afterwards, to the horror and consternation of Captain Doleful, Mama let it out that Letitia had both sisters and brothers. Whereupon, our ever-mercenary friend, having been led to believe that the girl was an only child of a well-to-do mother, bolted from the house in disgust and, as was his wont on distressful occasions, went to ground—or, to be exact, to bed, there to nurse his grievances.

Nevertheless, he had gone too far to have any chance of backing out, and, yielding to pressure brought to bear by Sir Archey, was reluctantly compelled to suffer himself to be led to the altar.

Humbugging, selfishness and avarice—not altogether uncommon faults among Surtees characters—were Doleful’s besetting sins, and although, as Master of the Ceremonies at Handley Cross, he served his purpose and performed his self-imposed

duties with tolerable success, he always had at least one eye on his pocket, and one cannot but feel it was a strange twist of fate, and a curious dispensation of providence, that enriched so unworthy and self-seeking a character with the ample fortune of Miss Crabstick, whose choice only tends to confirm the oft-repeated belief that there is no accounting for the whims of women.

But our gallant Captain has batted long enough, and must now make way for a character of very different calibre.

CHAPTER IV

LORD SCAMPERDALE

(References are to *Mr. Sponge's Sporting Tour*.)

SURTEES created one of his most remarkable characters in the person of the Right Honourable the Earl of Scamperdale, formerly Viscount Hardup, for he was a curious mixture of a man, being a tremendous autocrat and rightly sensible of the importance of his position as a peer of the realm, yet rough alike in appearance and manner, and content to live a secluded existence in the back premises of Woodmansterne, the imposing home of his ancestors.

He was the eighth of his line, and as the sixth Earl had been over-lavish in his expenditure, it followed that his successor had, perforce, to live frugally. Thus, by the time the subject of this chapter succeeded to the earldom, the family fortunes had not only recovered, but, in consequence of the seventh Earl's strict economy, exercised throughout a protracted tenure of the title, had risen to an immense figure. Yet, during his long spell as heir to an impoverished parent, so accustomed had he become to plain living, that the eighth Lord Scamperdale preferred to continue in like manner, at any rate so long as he remained a bachelor.

His one and only extravagance was fox-hunting. He had his own hounds, and insisted on everything connected with them being of the best. In all other respects he pinched and scraped to such an extent that a crossing-sweeper would hardly have envied him his lot. He lived in the servants' quarters with only barest necessities in the way of furniture, which was plain and rough, the remainder of the house being shut up and everything put away "against," as he described it, "the time he got married."

He cared nothing for personal appearance, his hunting kit being notable for its strength, its durability, its ill-fitting shapelessness. Instead of the velvet hunting cap commonly affected by masters of hounds, he preferred, and invariably wore, one of the curious, plate-like hats, adopted by followers of his hounds, from which the title of Flat Hat Hunt was derived.

Lord Scamperdale's physical attractions, if indeed any existed, were far from being noticeable, for he was a squat, square-bodied, square-headed, short-legged man, with a closely shaven head that looked as hard as a Sebastopol cannon ball, and great goggle eyes, framed by immense horn-rimmed spectacles.

On non-hunting days, as well as on returning from hunting, he was wont to adorn himself in comfortable, loose-fitting tartan tweeds of red and yellow, and only on the rarest occasions did he wear anything smarter, his best clothes, like almost everything else in the house, being put away "against he got married."

At the time of his first encounter with our old friend Soapey Sponge, described

in a foregoing chapter, his lordship was forty-three years of age and as hard as nails. As a rider to hounds he was a regular tiger, and nothing but the most impossible obstacle could induce him to turn a hair's breadth from his line. Though always well-mounted, no one could ride as straight as he did without occasionally coming to grief. Yet the inevitable tumbling and knocking about tended but to increase his boundless enthusiasm, and he would, assuredly, have endorsed the dictum that

"No game or sport is worth a rap
For Englishmen to play,
Into which no accident or mishap
Can ever find a way."

Jack Spraggon, who acted as a sort of A.D.C. to his lordship, was curiously like him in appearance, manner, hard-riding, and, in fact, almost every respect. Jack was square and squat—Jack was short-legged and shaven-headed—Jack had big staring eyes and wore enormous spectacles. Altogether, at a distance, it was no easy matter to tell t'other from which.

Surtees described Lord Scamperdale's appearance as that of "a drayman in scarlet," a portrayal that might equally well have been applied to Jack Spraggon, who aped his employer in every possible way.

Like so many Surtees characters, the noble Earl had in him something of the humbug, without, however, either the plausible oiliness of a Jawleyford or the offensive impudence of a Sponge.

Consequent upon his experiences as Lord Hardup, liberality, in any shape or form, had to him become anathema. Indeed, he would go to almost any lengths to save even trifling expenditure or to avoid the smallest wear and tear of his property.

Enforced economy of the strictest order, for so many years, had impregnated him with a niggardliness that he could not, or would not, eradicate.

For instance, after promising to lend Spraggon his silver-rimmed spectacles as a means of inducing him to undertake a distasteful visit to Jawleyford Court, he managed, at the last moment, to get out of the bargain and to palm off on poor Jack an inferior pair.

"You promised me the silver ones," observed Jack, who wanted to be smart.

"Did I?" replied his lordship; "I declare I'd forgot. Ah yes, I believe I did," added he, with an air of sudden enlightenment,— "the pair upstairs; but how the deuce to get at them I don't know, for the key of the Indian cabinet is locked in the old oak press in the still-room, and the key of the still-room is locked away in the linen-press in the green lumber-room at the top of the house, and the key of the green lumber-room is in a drawer at the bottom of the wardrobe in the Star-chamber, and the——"

"Ah, well; never mind," grunted Jack, interrupting the labyrinth of lies. "I daresay these will do," putting them on; adding, "Now, if you'll lend me a shawl for my neck, and a mackintosh, my name will be *Walker*."



Lord Scamperdale with his inseparable double Jack Spraggon

“Better make it *Trotter*,” replied his lordship, “considering the distance you have to go.”

Because he knew the roads were bad between Woodmansterne and Jawleyford Court, and so as to avoid knocking a good horse about, he sent his luckless envoy on the twenty-five mile journey or more, behind a mare bought for the kennel, thinking to get a little more work out of the unfortunate animal, before finally consigning her to the boiler.

“That’s a good-shaped beast,” observed his lordship, as she now came hitching round to the door; “I really think she would make a cover hack.”

“Sooner you ride her than me,” replied Jack, who was up to all his employer’s tricks, and not likely to be taken in by such gammon.

Lord Scamperdale lived only for hunting, and neither thought, talked nor dreamt of much else. Tough as leather, he cared nothing for comfort, disdained luxury and was content with the plainest of fare. Moreover, by shutting up the house he was relieved of the tiresome necessity and expense of entertaining, and became free to live with his crony, Jack Spraggon, in the quarters normally occupied by Baggs, the butler.

Though by no means averse to female society, he was inclined to be timid in the matter of marriage, and reluctant to take a plunge that would undoubtedly entail his conversion from a “starving” Earl to a “living” one. So thoroughly accustomed had he become to his frugal existence, that the prospect of marriage with its necessary upheaval and, above all, the outlay involved, alarmed him rather seriously.

He realized, however, that sooner or later the time must come, for after all, rough and ready as he was, a peer of the realm with a considerable fortune could hardly expect to resist indefinitely the pressure of inevitable aspirants to his coronet and purse.

So, with the possibility ever before him, he lived contentedly with Jack and the knowledge that he had made all preparations and put everything carefully away, “against he got married.”

His lordship’s flow of language, when roused to anger by an offender out hunting, was astonishing, and although, more often than not, he left the slanging to Jack Spraggon, himself no mean performer, his own particular brand of abuse stood out by itself, and might well have been envied by many a master of more recent times who has delighted in indulging the rough of his tongue, often with little or no justification.

Poor Soapey Sponge, for example, though he unquestionably deserved much of what he got, seemed fated to incur the noble wrath. In a previous chapter we have told of his unfortunate first meeting with the master of the Flat Hat Hunt. Equally disastrous, alas, were the circumstances attending a renewal of their acquaintance on the following day, when Sponge, riding the iron-mouthed Hercules, despite all his efforts, was carried right into the hounds at a check.

Whereupon his lordship and Jack let fly with both barrels, there being little to choose on this occasion between their respective efforts.

“*Sing out, Jack! sing out! for heaven’s sake sing out,*” shrieked his lordship, shutting his eyes, as he added, “or he’ll kill every man Jack of them.”

“Oh, you scandalous, hypocritical, rusty-booted, numb-handed son of a puffing corn-cutter, why don’t you turn your attention to feeding hens, cultivating cabbages, or making pantaloons for small folk, instead of killing hounds in this wholesale way?” roared Jack.

“Oh, you unsightly, sanctified, idolatrous, Bagnigge-Wells coppersmith,” bellowed Lord Scamperdale, “you think because I’m a lord, and can’t swear or use coarse language, that you may do what you like; rot you, sir, I’ll present you with a testimonial! I’ll settle a hundred a year upon you if you’ll quit the country.” But just as our master was warming up to his best form, hounds recovered the line, putting a stop to the ranting and rating.

Nevertheless, as he and Jack galloped on together, Sponge was still uppermost in his thoughts.

“Hang it, Jack,” exclaimed Lord Scamperdale, “see if you can’t sarve out this unrighteous, mahogany-booted, rattlesnake. *Do*, if you *die* for it!—I’ll bury your remainders genteelly—patent coffin with brass nails, all to yourself—put Frosty (huntsman to the F.H.H.) and all the fellows in black, and raise a white marble monument to your memory, declaring you were the most spotless virtuous man under the sun.”

“Let me off dining with Jaw (Jawleyford), and I’ll do my best,” replied Jack.

“*Done!*” screamed his lordship, flourishing his right arm in the air, as he flew over a great stone wall.

And finally, as already described, the luckless Soapey, riding the hard-pulling Multum-in-Parvo, crowned his performances with Lord Scamperdale’s hounds by colliding with his lordship and throwing him heavily to the ground.

We have said that Lord Scamperdale was not averse to the society of women. Nor was he insensible of their attractions, for, while frankly admitting he would have nothing to do with “the ugly ’uns,” he could be relied upon to make the running with any woman of good looks. In the presence of women, his habitual terse, rather boorish manner disappeared, and, though neither awkward nor shy in their company, his customary brusque assertiveness gave way to relative docility, and even some measure of charm.

One of his favourites was the pretty wife of Farmer Springwheat, and had she not become Mrs. Springwheat, with a comfortable, ever-increasing brood of little Springwheats, there is no knowing that she might not have acquired the dignity of a countess as chatelaine of Woodmansterne.

Evidence of such a possibility was forthcoming when one evening, as Jack Spraggon and his master, clothed in their roomy tartan tweeds and scarlet slippers, sat sipping their gin in the dreary sanctum they called home, Jack expressed a hope that honest Farmer Springwheat was out of the brook that had brought about his downfall earlier in the day.

“To be hoped so,” replied his lordship; thinking if he wasn’t, whether he should marry Mrs. Springwheat or not.

Typical of Lord Scamperdale's flirtatious way with all but "the ugly 'uns" of the fair sex, was the enraptured attention he paid Mrs. Springwheat on the day hounds were at Larkhall Hill, her husband's farm.

"Well, my lady, and how are you?" exclaimed his lordship, advancing gaily, and seizing both her pretty hands as she rose to receive him. "I declare, you look younger and prettier every time I see you."

"Oh! my lord," simpered Mrs. Springwheat, "you gentlemen are always so complimentary."

"Not a bit of it!" exclaimed his lordship, eyeing her intently through his spectacles. "I always tell Jack you are the handsomest woman in Christendom; don't I, Jack?" inquired his lordship, appealing to his factotum.

"Yes, my lord," replied Jack, who always swore to whatever his lordship said.

"By Jove!" continued his lordship, with a stamp of his foot, "if I could find such a woman I'd marry her to-morrow. Not such women as you to pick up every day. And what a lot of pretty pups!" exclaimed his lordship, starting back, pretending to be struck with the row of staring, black-haired, black-eyed, half-frightened children. "Now, that's what I call a good entry, all dogs—all boys, I mean?"

"No, my lord," replied Mrs. Springwheat, laughing, "these are girls," laying her hand on the heads of two of them, who were now full giggle at the idea of being taken for boys.

Then, having partaken of the farmer's liberal hospitality:

"Good morning, my dear Mrs. Springwheat," exclaimed he, seizing both her soft fat-fingered hands and squeezing them ardently. "Good morning, my dear Mrs. Springwheat," repeated he, adding, "By Jove! if ever there was an angel in petticoats, you're her; I'd give a hundred pounds for such a wife as you! I'd give a thousand pounds for such a wife as you! By the powers! I'd give five thousand pounds for such a wife as you!"

That was the day when our master, leaving Jack and Sponge and many others tucking into Farmer Springwheat's munificent breakfast, stole away on his own, and had "the finest run that ever was seen." And when he got home, plastered with mud from three falls, carrying triumphantly in one hand a magnificent specimen of a fox's brush and in the other a much battered hat, while in one of his pockets reposed the torn-off lap of his coat, nothing could have exceeded his joyful exultation. Indeed, so intense was his delight that, for once, throwing caution to the winds, he recklessly resolved to celebrate the occasion with a bottle of port.

Moreover, contrary to his normal niggardliness, he evinced no particular agitation on account of his seriously damaged clothes, demonstrating what we have endeavoured to make clear, that his incomparable enthusiasm for hunting outweighed all other considerations, even his mania for economy.

Actually, Jack seemed more concerned about his lordship's garments than he was himself.

"But what's happened you behind?—what's happened you behind?" asked Jack, as his lordship turned to the fire, and exhibited his docked tail.

"Oh, hang the coat!—it's neither here nor there," replied his lordship;—"hat neither," he added, exhibiting its crushed proportions.'

"It's your new coat, too," observed Jack, examining it with concern as he spoke.'

"'Deed, it is!" replied his lordship, with a shake of the head. "That's the consequence of having gone out to breakfast. If it had been to-morrow, for instance, I should have had number two on, or maybe number three," his lordship having coats of every shade and grade, from stainless scarlet down to tattered mulberry colour.'

Himself, so hard a rider and so ardent a fox-hunter, it is not surprising that Lord Scamperdale could find little to commend in those who hunted for any reason other than pure love of the sport. For the dandy who appeared at the cover side only to show off in a scarlet coat and perfection in leathers and boots; for the prosperous individual who looked upon the pretence of hunting as a means of climbing the social ladder; for the person who, though having no notion of being one, is anxious to be regarded as a sportsman—for all these types Lord Scamperdale entertained the greatest abhorrence, the most profound contempt.

One who might be said to have qualified for all three classes was Mr. Thomas Puffington, master of the Hanby (late Mangeysterne) foxhounds.

The very name of Puffington had much the same effect on his lordship as a red rag is said to have on a bull. But when, one evening, our Right Honourable friend received from this abomination a letter, couched in what he considered to be terms of impudent familiarity, his indignation knew no bounds.

As he and Jack, having satisfied their appetites on cow-heel and batter-pudding, sat as usual before the fire in their straight-backed wooden chairs, with the gin bottle between them, the letter was brought in by Baggs the butler.

"That must be from a woman," observed Jack, squinting ardently at the writing, as his lordship inspected the fine seal.'

"Not far wrong," replied his lordship. "From a bitch of a fellow, at all events," said he, reading the words "Hanby House" in the wax.'

"What can old Puffey be wanting now?" inquired Jack.'

"Some bother about hounds, most likely," replied his lordship, breaking the seal; adding, "the thing's always amusing itself with playing at sportsman. Hang his impudence! How d'ye think he begins?"'

"Can't tell, I'm sure," said Jack, squinting his eyes inside out.'

"Dear Scamp!" exclaimed his lordship, throwing out his arms. "Dear Scamp," repeated he, with a snort; adding, "the impudent button-maker! I'll dear Scamp him!"'

With increasing anger, aloud he read on:

"Our friend Sponge is coming on a visit of inspection to my hounds, and I should be glad if you would meet him."'

"Bo-o-y the powers, just fancy that!" exclaimed his lordship, throwing himself back in his chair, as if thoroughly overcome with disgust. "*Our friend Sponge!* the man who nearly knocked me into the middle of the week after next—the man who, first and last, has broken every bone in my skin—the man who I hate the

sight of, and detest afresh every time I see—the 'bomination of all 'bominations; and then to call him our friend Sponge! *Meet him!*" snapped his lordship; "I'd go ten miles to avoid him." '

Continuing his reading of the letter:

' "If you bring a couple of nags or so we can put them up, and you may get a wrinkle or two from Bragg (Mr. Puffington's consequential huntsman)." '

' "A wrinkle or two from Bragg," exclaimed his lordship, dropping the letter and rolling in his chair with laughter. "A wrinkle or two from Bragg!—he—he—he—he! The idea of a wrinkle or two from Bragg!—haw—haw—haw—haw!" '

' "That beats cock-fightin'," observed Jack.'

' "Doesn't it?" replied his lordship. "The man who's so brimful of science that he doesn't kill above three brace of foxes in a season." '

Resuming his reading:

' "I think I have a hound that may be useful to you" '—' "The devil you have!" exclaimed his lordship, grinding his teeth with disgust. "Useful to *me*, you confounded haberdasher!—you hav'n't a hound in your pack that I'd take." '

And so he went on, reading and cursing, cursing and reading to the end when it was finally agreed that Jack, who was included in the invitation, should go to take the conceit out of Puffington.

' "Well," said Jack, "I really think it will be worth doing. I've never been at the beggar's shop, and they say he lives well." '

' "*Well*, aye!" exclaimed his lordship; "fat o' the land—daresay that man has fish and soup every day." '

' "And wax-candles to read by, most likely," observed Jack, squinting at the dim mutton-fats that Baggs now brought in.'

' "Not so grand as *that*," observed his lordship, doubting whether any man could be guilty of such extravagance; "composites, p'r'aps." '

How effectively Jack Spraggon, albeit unwittingly, did assist in taking much of the conceit out of Puffington is related in our chapter devoted to the master of Hanby House.

Meanwhile, the reader must be afforded a glimpse of the noble Earl as he appeared in his best clothes and on his best behaviour, as a guest at Jawleyford Court, when the two Misses Jawleyford, Amelia and Emily, vied with one another in laying siege to his heart, his coronet and his fortune.

Dressed in a dark frock-coat with velvet collar and cuffs, trousers of military cut buckled under boots fitted with heel spurs, he rode through the neighbourhood to the home of his host, almost unrecognized by the passers-by. Indeed it was said that even the local police chief, Titus Grabington, would have found some difficulty in identifying him.

Equally smart was his lordship's appearance that evening at dinner—'new blue coat with velvet collar, silk facings, and the Flat Hat Hunt button—a striding fox, with the letters "F.H.H." below—a white waistcoat with turquoise buttons, a lace-frilled shirt, and a most extensive once-round Joinville.'

By the end of an uneventful evening, no one could have asserted with any

justification that Lord Scamperdale had shown favour to one or the other of Jawleyford's two quite attractive daughters, and though both were obviously in the running, neither could claim any advantage over her sister. Their methods differed in that, whereas Amelia, the elder, inclined towards forcing the pace, Emily relied on quieter, more modest tactics, and it remained to be seen which, if either, gained the Earl's approval. But their suspense was likely to be prolonged, for on descending to breakfast next morning, after a final survey of her undeniably pleasing appearance, and a murmured "now for victory," Amelia discovered, to her chagrin, that his lordship had gone out hunting.

One more clash between Lord Scamperdale and his pet abomination, Soapey Sponge, must be recorded, before letting the uninitiated reader into the secret of our nobleman's ultimate betrothal.

Sponge was hunting with Sir Harry Scattercash when, after a fast twenty minutes across Farleyfair Downs, not a horse could raise a gallop except Soapey's Hercules and the animal ridden by Watchorn, Sir Harry's huntsman, who, five minutes later, was, himself, obliged to drop out.

Borrowing the huntsman's horn, Sponge galloped on alone, and after riding to a holloa and ascertaining the line of the fox, had just blown a tremendous blast to collect the straggling hounds, when an angry voice behind him inquired: "WHO THE DICKENS ARE YOU?"

"*Who the Dickens are you?*" retorted Mr. Sponge, without looking round.

"They commonly call me the Earl of Scamperdale," roared the same sweet voice, "and those are my hounds."

"*They're not your hounds!*" snapped Mr. Sponge, now looking round on his big-spectacled, flat-hatted lordship, who was closely followed by his double, Mr. Spraggon.

"*Not my hounds!*" screeched his lordship. "Oh, ye barber's apprentice! Oh, ye draper's assistant! Oh, ye *unmitigated* Mahomedon! Sing out, Jack! sing out! For Heaven's sake, sing out!" added he, throwing out his arms in perfect despair.

"Not his lordship's hounds!" roared Jack, now rising in his stirrups and brandishing his big whip. "Not his lordship's hounds! Tell me *that*, when they cost him five-and-twenty 'underd—two thousand five 'underd a-year! Oh, by Jingo, but that's a pretty go! If they're not his lordship's hounds, I should like to know whose they are?" and thereupon Jack wiped the foam from his mouth on his sleeve.

"Sir Harry's!" exclaimed Mr. Sponge, again putting the horn to his lips, and blowing another shrill blast.

"*Sir Harry's!*" screeched his lordship in disgust, for he hated the very sound of his name—"Sir Harry's! Oh, you rusty-booted ruffian! Tell me that to my very face!"

"Sir Harry's!" repeated Jack, again standing erect in his stirrups. "What! impeach his lordship's integrity—oh, by Jove, there's an end of everything! Death before dishonour! Slugs in a saw-pit! Pistols and coffee for two!"

Jack's employer then took up the running:

"Oh, you sanctified, putrified, pestilential, perpendicular, gingerbread-

booted, counter-skipplin' snob, you think because I'm a lord, and can't swear or use coarse language, that you may do what you like; but I'll let you see the contrary. Mark you, sir, I'll fight you, sir, any non-hunting day you like, sir, 'cept Sunday.' '

The upshot of it all was that Sir Harry's hounds ran into Lord Scamperdale's fox, and his lordship's hounds killed Sir Harry's!

That our noble master's heart was by no means as hard as the rest of his make-up, became evident when poor Jack met a violent death in a steeplechase before his very eyes.

Overcome by genuine grief at the loss of his close companion and trusty henchman, his lordship completely broke down.

' "Oh, my dear Jack!" sobbed he, as he mopped the fast-chasing tears from his grizzly cheeks with a red cotton kerchief. "Oh, my dear Jack!" repeated he, as a fresh flood spread o'er the rugged surface. "Oh, what a tr-treasure, what a tr-tr-trump he was. Shall never get such another. Nobody could s-s-lang a fi-fi-field as he could; no hu-hu-humbug 'bout him—never was su-su-such a fine natural bl-bl-blackguard"; and then his feelings wholly choked his utterance as he recollected how easily Jack was satisfied; how he could dine off tripe and cow-heel, mop up fat porridge for breakfast, and never grumbled at being put on a bad horse.'

Soon afterwards, Lord Scamperdale, seeking consolation for the loss of his Jack, determined to marry and chance the expense, a decision that Mrs. Jawleyford did nothing to discourage.

There only remained the problem of which to choose, Amelia or Emily, and after 'wondering which would be the least likely to ruin him,' his lordship finally capitulated to the attractions of the younger, leaving poor Amelia to fall back on 'fair, fat and forty' Thomas Puffington.

CHAPTER V

JAMES PIGG

(References are to *Handley Cross* and *Hillingdon Hall*.)

WHEN Mr. Jorrocks, on accepting the mastership of the Handley Cross foxhounds, advertised for a huntsman, his announcement was answered in person by, perhaps, the most curious creature in human guise that the chubby old tea merchant had ever set eyes on.

But he was to be congratulated on his astuteness, for despite the applicant's unprepossessing appearance, his quite unintelligible north-country jargon, his uncouth manners and somewhat independent attitude, John Jorrocks, with the almost uncanny instinct that guided his actions in all matters relating to fox-hunting, decided to try this strange-looking savage from the far north, with a name as odd as the apparition he presented, who quickly justified his selection by proving to be as bold a horseman, as skilful a huntsman, as ardent an enthusiast for the sport as the most exacting of masters could desire.

No, James Pigg, for thus was he styled, could hardly have relied on looks to influence Mr. Jorrocks in his favour, for his appearance would clearly have got him away to a bad start in any kind of endeavour.

Long, lanky and loose-limbed, his sparse figure, ungainly and ill-knit, disguised a wiry strength, prodigious powers of endurance and boundless energy. Though by no means old, his skimpy, unkempt hair was streaked with grey, and his general appearance that of a man who was no stranger to the rougher side of life. His ill-assorted clothes had seen better days, but about them was an unmistakable sporting stamp that doubtless appealed to the new master of hounds. Well-worn breeches and cloth buttoned gaiters, albeit misshapen from long and hard usage, a scarlet waistcoat and bird's-eye neckcloth, combined to produce an impression that the wearer indulged in some form of sporting pursuit.

But it will, perhaps, be appropriate to introduce him to the reader as he presented himself before the M.F.H. on the day of his application.

"*Humph!*" grunted Mr. Jorrocks, as he eyed him, observing aloud to himself, "Vot a long-legged beggar it is," inwardly resolving he wouldn't do."

"*Your sarvant, Sir,*" said the figure. "Heard tell ye was in wants of a honts-man."

"*Humph!*" grunted Mr. Jorrocks again, "*you* don't look much like one. Vere d'ye come from?"

"*Cannynewcassel,*" replied Pigg. "*Ye'll ken Cannynewcassel nae doubt.*"

"*Carn't say as 'ow I do,*" replied Mr. Jorrocks thoughtfully. "*Is it any way near Dundee?*"



James Pigg. The meet at the "Cat and Custard-Pot"

"Dundee! no—what should put that i' your head?" snapped Pigg.'

"Wot should put that i' my head!" retorted Mr. Jorrocks, boiling up. "Vy, it must be near somewhere!"'

"Near somewhere!" now exclaimed Pigg, indignant at the slight thus put on his famous city. "Why, it's a great town of itsel'—ye surely ken Newcassel where arle the coals come frae?"'

"You said Candied Newcassel," enunciated Mr. Jorrocks, slowly and emphatically, "from which I natterally concluded it was near Dundee, where they make the candied confectionary. I get my marmeylad from there. I'm not such a hignorant hass," continued he, "as not to know where Newcastle is. I've been i' Scotland myself! Durham at least."'

"Wot 'ounds have you been with?" asked he.'

"A, a vast," replied Pigg, "yen way and another. Aye, ar' ken all the hounds amaist. Tyndale, and D'orm, and Horworth, and arl."'

"Ah, but those 'ill be Scotch dogs," observed Mr. Jorrocks, "a country I knows nothin' whatever on—have you been in any civilized country?"'

"Aye, civil, aye, they're all civil enough—'gin ye're civil to them. If ye set up your gob, they'll mump it, ar's warn'd."'

"Con-founded nuisance," muttered Mr. Jorrocks, "not being able to get an 'untsman."'

"Do you *think* now," continued he, "you're ekle to my place? First-rate establishment, splendid pack of 'ounds, invaluab' osses, swell country, critical field."'

"Why, now, it's not for me to say," replied Pigg, turning his quid, "but ar's fond o' hunds, and ar'd de my best te please ye."'

"Well," thought Mr. Jorrocks, "that's summut at all events. You can ride I s'pose?" observed he.'

"Ride! aye, ar wish ar'd nout else te de."'

"You'll be werry keen, I s'pose?" said Mr. Jorrocks, brightening as he went.'

"Ar's varra hungry, if that's what ye mean," replied Pigg.'

"No," said Mr. Jorrocks, "I means, you'll be desperation fond of 'unting."'

"Fond o' huntin'! Oh faith is I—there's nout like huntin'."'

"Can you 'unt a pack of 'ounds?" inquired Mr. Jorrocks.'

"Why, now, it's not for me to say," replied Pigg, "but ar's used to hunds, and ar's fond o' hunds, and have travelled all o'er the world amaist—Bliss ye, all the sportin' gentlemen ken me, King o' Hungary and all!"'

"Well, you shall eat as you're 'ungry," replied Mr. Jorrocks, not catching the last sentence. "Tell me now can you holloa?"'

"Hoop, and holloa, and TALLI-HO!" exclaimed Pigg, at the top of his voice, his eyes sparkling with animation.'

Some further discussion on the matter of wages ended in Pigg demanding his "arles."

"Your wot?" inquired Mr. Jorrocks.'

“My arles! we always get arles i’ wor country.”

“Wot *all* your wittles at once?”

“No, man—sir, ar mean—summut to bind bargain like.”

“I twig! See, there’s a shillin’ for you. Now go and get your dinner—be werry keen mind.”

James Pigg thus became installed as huntsman of the Handley Cross foxhounds, and so curious an association as that of a cockney tea merchant and a raw-boned, north-country barbarian, was inaugurated.

That James was a “character,” both his appearance and his manner loudly proclaimed. He possessed, to a pronounced extent, the northern spirit of independence, that brooked little interference and belligerently resisted opposition. No respecter of persons, impudence slid from his tongue as readily and naturally as melting snow from a house-top. Even in addressing his master he could not avoid falling into his customary rough familiarity, often extended to veritable rudeness. For instance, on his first day out with hounds, when Mr. Jorrocks told him—“I’d like *well* to kill a fox to-day; I’d praise you werry much if we did,” Pigg churlishly replied: “Solid puddin’s better nor empty praise.”

And again on the same day:

“Hould hard, ye sackless ould sinner!” cried Pigg, crossing the main ride at a canter, and nearly knocking Jorrocks off his horse, as he charged him in his stride. “*Had* (hold) *bye*, ar say!” he roared in his master’s ear; “or ar’ll be dingin’ on ye down—fox crossed reet in onder husse’s tail, and thou sits glowerin’ there and never see’d him.”

In his pocket James invariably carried a large steel box containing tobacco, which he chewed incessantly as evidenced by two streams of brown juice trickling from the corners of his mouth down the sides of his chin, giving him the appearance, as Surtees tells us, of a Chinese mandarin.

His hard riding was a never-ending source of astonishment and admiration to Mr. Jorrocks, who made occasional entries in his journal such as:

“Pigg rode like a trump!—seven falls—knocked a rood of brick-wall down with his ’ead. What a nob that must be!” And again—“Pigg flew a double flight of oak rails, and Bin (Benjamin, whipper-in) began to cry as soon as ever he saw them.”

Pigg’s riding on the famous “Cat and Custard-Pot” day, roused his master to eulogy:

“Wot a man it is to ride!” ejaculated Jorrocks, eyeing Pigg putting one of Duncan Nevin’s (Handley Cross jobmaster) nags that had never seen hounds before at a post and rail that almost made him rise perpendicularly to clear. “Well done you!” continued Mr. Jorrocks, as with a flounder and scramble James got his horse on his legs on the far side, and proceeded to scuttle away again as hard as before. “Wot a chap it would be if it could only keep itself sober!”

Excessive drinking was Pigg’s besetting sin, and although old Jorrocks looked upon it with a disapproving eye, he had been known, in an excess of frantic excitement at the prospect of killing a fox, to promise his huntsman brandy out of a quart

pot for breakfast, dinner and supper, if he succeeded. A curious way of encouraging sobriety!

“Brandy and baccy ’ill gar a man live for iver!” Pigg was wont to declare when in his cups, a condition in which Mr. Jorrocks, on arriving rather late at the sign of the “Cat and Custard-Pot,” where the hounds and a large field had been awaiting the master, unfortunately found him.

“*A-a-a* sink!” exclaims Pigg, “here’s canny ard sweetbreeks hissel!” adding with a slap of his thigh as the roar of laughter the exclamation produced subsided, “*A-a-a*, but ar de like to see his feulish ard feace a grinnin’ in onder his cap!”

“How way! canny man, how way! and give us a wag o’ thy neif,” shouts Pigg, extending his hand as he spoke.

“*Humph!*” grunted Mr. Jorrocks, “wot’s all this about?”

“Sink, but ar’ll gi’ thou a gob full o’ baccy,” continued James, diving into his pocket and producing a large steel tobacco box.

But on Mr. Jorrocks accusing his huntsman of being drunk, Pigg, with characteristic belligerency, quickly changed his tone.

‘Pigg: “Ar’s as sober as ye are, and a deal wizer!”’

‘Jorrocks, angrily: “I’ll not condescend to compare notes with ye!”’

‘Pigg, now flaring up: “Sink! if anybody ’ill had mar huss, ar’ll get off and fight him.”’

‘Jorrocks, contemptuously: “Better stick to the shop-board as long as you can.”’

‘Pigg, furious: “Gin ar warn’t afeard o’ boggin mar neif, ard gi’ thou a good crack i’ thy kite!”’

‘Jorrocks, with emphasis: “*Haw-da-cious* feller. I’ll ’unt the ’ounds myself afore I’ll put hup with sich himperence!”’

‘Pigg, throwing out his arms and grinning in ecstasies: “Ar’ll be death of a guinea but ar’ll coom and see thee!”’

Finally, after informing the field that he intended to take the hounds home, and his drunken huntsman that he had no further use for his services, Mr. Jorrocks, ‘gathering up his big whip as if for the fray’ delivered himself of this parting shot at the, now, thoroughly refractory Pigg:

“You’re a hignorant, hawdacious, rebellious rascal, and I’ll see ye frightenin’ rats from a barn wi’ the bagpipes at a ’alfpenny a day, and findin’ yoursel, afore I’ll ’ave anything more to say to ye.”

“Sink, ar’ll tak’ and welt thee like an ard shoe, if thou gives me ony mair o’ thy gob!” rejoined the now furious Pigg, ejecting his baccy and motioning as if about to dismount.

But later in the day, sobered by a rousing gallop, at the end of which he saw his fox handsomely pulled down in the open, Pigg was not only forgiven by his master but embraced and applauded for his gratifying performance. All grievances were forgotten, all animosity vanished in the delirious excitement of the chase and old Jorrocks’s frantic delight at its triumphant conclusion.

Yet, drunk or sober, Pigg was utterly incorrigible, for though, at heart, loyal enough to his master, he would, from time to time, in consequence of his peculiar

disposition and fiery temper, unwittingly let him down. Completely devoid of tact, he would when out hunting hurl abuse at transgressors, real or imaginary, to the concern of parsimonious old Jorrocks, especially when the object of Pigg's wrath happened to be a liberal subscriber to the hounds.

Despite his master's insistence on the importance of impressing Pomponius Ego, the renowned sporting journalist, on the occasion of his visit to the Handley Cross hounds, with the excellence of everything connected with Mr. Jorrocks's establishment, James Pigg, when spoken to by the great man, could not suppress his habitual tone of impudent familiarity.

"A niceish lot of hounds," observed Ego, casually, as he brought his horse alongside James Pigg; and Pigg, instead of capping him, gave him a most uncere-
monious stare.'

"A dom'd nice pack! ar should say," replied Pigg.'

"Humph!" said Ego to himself, "a rummish genius this, I guess—I am POM-PO-NIUS EGO," observed he, with an air of annihilation.'

"Sae they say," replied Pigg, turning his quid. "What's your cracks?"'

"What's your *whats?*" repeated Ego to himself, without being able to hit off the scent. "Who told you I was Ego?" inquired he, after a pause, during which he kept scrutinizing Pigg.'

"Whe tell't me? Why, Jorrocks, to be sure! Whe else should?"'

"*Whe else should?*" repeated Ego, in disgust. "You're a pretty fellow for a huntsman."'

Commenting on Mr. Jorrocks's huntsman, in his subsequent newspaper article, Pomponius Ego wrote :

"I trotted on to have a little chat with his huntsman, a fellow of the appropriate name of Hogg. But what an example of a man was he! A great, lanky, hungry, ill-conditioned, raw-boned Borderer, speaking a language formed of the worst corruptions of Scotch and English, intelligible only to a master of languages like myself—a man devoid of the slightest idea of civility or respect, and whose manner would have baffled anyone who was to be borne down by impudent assurance."'

Pigg augmented the rather meagre remuneration received from Mr. Jorrocks by the proceeds of a scheme, entirely his own. This consisted in the sale of tickets to members of the field—one shilling a day or five shillings the season—purporting to insure the holders against risks inseparable from fox-hunting. And as so many, who were inveigled into buying these tickets, could lay no claim to be regarded as hard riders, favouring, indeed, most steadfastly the sound, hard road in preference to the uncertainties of enclosures bounded by forbidding-looking obstacles, our friend James reaped a substantial harvest, with the help of Benjamin, who, presumably for a consideration, was wont to canvass the field, shouting:

"Take your tickets, gents! please take your tickets! goin' into a hawful country—desperate bull finchers! yawnin' ditches! rails that'll nouter brick nor bend! Old 'un got his monkey full o' brandy!"'

Symbolical of the unruly attitude so frequently adopted by Pigg towards his long-suffering and forbearing master, was his retort to Mr. Jorrocks, who had

reproved him for being drunk out hunting, 'that he (Jorrocks) "had ne business out a hontin' on a drinkin' day." '

Yet, was not the master, himself, guilty, at times, of encouraging the man in his intemperate habits, even, indeed, to the extent of joining him in an occasional carouse. On the evening, for instance, when Pigg, as described in a previous chapter, mistaking a cupboard for the window, declared, in answer to his master's inquiry, that the night was hellish dark and smelt of cheese, he lacked nothing in the way of encouragement from Jorrocks who, while arranging for one of his endless bye-days, plied him with glass after glass of brandy, until what with the grog and excitement aroused by their hunting discussion, they burst into song and, in the temporary absence of Mrs. Jorrocks and Belinda, enjoyed a thoroughly hilarious debauch.

'And Jorrocks did drink, and did whoop, and did holloa, and did shout, till he made himself hoarse. His spirits, or the brandy spirits, seemed to have fairly run away with him. At length he began to cool down and think of the morrow. "Now you and I'll have an 'unt," observed Mr. Jorrocks.'

' "Squire Stobbs 'll gan te ar's warn'd," observed Pigg.'

' "Oh, never mind him," replied Jorrocks; "no sayin' when he may be 'ome—gone fiddlin' out with the women." '

' "He's aye ticklin' the lasses' hocks," observed Pigg.'

But beneath James Pigg's rough, uncouth, truculent exterior, beat a warm heart. His reunion with Mr. Jorrocks, described in *Hillingdon Hall*, shows that he was really attached to the genial, sporting grocer, and genuinely delighted at this chance meeting with his old master.

It was in the neighbourhood of Hillingdon Hall, Mr. Jorrocks's home since retiring from business and giving up hunting, that they accidentally met, Pigg being engaged in driving cattle for his "coosin Deavilboger," on whose farm, near "Cannynewcassel," he had been employed before attaining the dignity of huntsman to the Handley Cross foxhounds.

' "Vy, it's James Pigg!" exclaimed Mr. Jorrocks, running towards him. "James, my good frind, 'ow d'ye do?" '

' "Nicely, thank ye; how's theesel?" replied James, offering his hand. "Give us a wag o' thy neif." '

' "D——n, but ar's glad to see thee," said James. "Ah, God, what a belly thou's gotten," added he, eyeing his late master's corporation.'

Then, sitting at the roadside, they enjoyed a long talk over old times, recalling their hunting experiences at Handley Cross.

' "Those were fine times, James!" exclaimed Mr. Jorrocks, "those were fine times!" '

' "Aye were they!" replied Pigg, wiping his tobacco-stained mouth across the back of his hand. "Sink it, what brandy we used to drink! Have never had a real good drench since, but yance." '

' "Vot a lot o' rum battons you've got on your breeches and gaiters," observed Mr. Jorrocks, looking at Pigg's legs.'

"Aye," replied Pigg, cocking up one of his spindle shanks, "the breeks is a pair o' yeer ard 'uns; they're what ye had on the day t'ard huss coup'd ye into the bog."

"I minds it, James Pigg!" exclaimed Mr. Jorrocks, brightening up at the recollection. "I minds it," repeated he, taking hold of the old shags—"many a good run I've seen in them breeches—dear old things," continued Mr. Jorrocks, rubbing his hand down them as he would down a horse. "You've done them justice in the batton line, I'm glad to see," observed he. "Lots o' foxes! lots o' fine things! Coronets, and I don't know wot!"

"Aye, *lots*," replied Pigg. "Sink it, ar's glad ar put them on to-day. They're mar lucky breeks. Ah, they're a grand sight o' buttons!"

Pigg, thereupon, proceeded to discuss at some length the various buttons and the hounds they represented, until at length, wearied by the endless jabber, Mr. Jorrocks exclaimed: "*Dash your battons*, tell me what do you do when you're not cattle-drivin'?"

"Why, I works for mar coosin Deavilboger," growled Pigg; "ploughs, dikes, sows, reaps—aught in fact."

"Humph," grunted Mr. Jorrocks. "I s'pose you'd like to get a good place?"

"Ne doot," replied Pigg, "ne doot, where there are some hunds."

"You wouldn't like a farm-servant's place, I s'pose?" observed Mr. Jorrocks.

"Ah faith, ar's not sarcy! ar'd turn my hand to aught."

"Or go anywhere?" asked Mr. Jorrocks.

"Ah, arll places is alike to me," replied Pigg. "Ar's gotten a bit shop enow that mar missus keeps, but ar could soon shut that up."

"Vot, you've got a missus, 'ave you?" observed Mr. Jorrocks.

"Housekeeper, that's to say," replied Pigg, "housekeeper—*ar niver marries them*," added he, with a shake of the head!

"And vot do you sell?" inquired Mr. Jorrocks.

"Why, tape, pins, thread, buttons, galluses, onything—ye didna want ne galluses, ar's warn'd, de ye?"

"No vot?" inquired Mr. Jorrocks.

"*Galluses*," repeated Pigg—"things to had your breeks up by," explained he.

"No, but I thinks *you* do," replied Mr. Jorrocks, looking at the great inter-regnum between Pigg's red waistcoat and shags.

"I'll give you summut to get a glass with," observed Mr. Jorrocks. "There," said he, "there's a dollar for you, and when you've delivered your cattle, if you come back this way I'll give you another, and meanwhile I'll try to get you a place."

"Ah, you *are* a grand man," replied Pigg. "Ye dinna want ne sarvant yoursel, ar's warn'd?"

"I lives about a mile and an 'alf from here," observed Mr. Jorrocks, pointing in the direction of the village of Hillingdon. "You ask for Squire Jorrocks; anybody can tell ye where I lives."

The last we heard of James Pigg in *Handley Cross* was when Mr. Jorrocks

offered to increase his wages if he would make an honest woman of Betsey, who had "had to get her stays let out again."

This, however, our friend James seems to have failed to do, for in *Hillingdon Hall* we find Squire Jorrocks, after taking Pigg back into his service as a kind of bailiff to look after things when he and Mrs. Jorrocks were away, again alluding to the subject of Betsey.

"Then I was a thinkin'," observed Mr. Jorrocks, rubbing his chin, "I was a thinkin' that Batsey p'r'aps might be useful to you."

"So," said Pigg.

"She's a fine woman," observed Mr. Jorrocks, "and I should like to place her in good hands."

"Ne doot," replied Pigg, "ne doot"; adding, "why, ar daresay ar could manish her too."

"There'll be a *leetle* incambrance," observed Mr. Jorrocks, in an undertone.

"Why, why," replied Pigg, with a jerk of the head, "why, why"; adding, "ar expects it's mar *owne*."

"*Vot, another!*" exclaimed Mr. Jorrocks. "Who'd ha' thought it?"

However, from the following rather startling advertisement, it would appear that, ultimately, everything was satisfactorily arranged:

"TO PARENTS AND GUARDIANS"

"Professor Pigg, of the Royal Caledonian University, having been appointed by John Jorrocks, Esq., M.P., to manage his extensive agricultural concerns, begs to announce his intention of receiving a limited number of MUD STUDENTS, who will be instructed in the newest and most approved farming mysteries, particklar the use of guano, nitrate of sober, and other hartificial mextures.

The young gentlemen's linen and morals will be under the immediate superintendence of Mrs. Pigg, and they will in every respect be treated the same as the little Piggs.

For terms and further particklars apply to the Professor at Hillingdon Hall."

CHAPTER VI

FACEY ROMFORD

(References are to *Mr. Romford's Hounds* and
Mr. Sponge's Sporting Tour.)

MR. FRANCIS GILROY ROMFORD, to give him his full name, occupied a prominent place among the many impostors created by Surtees. Indeed, for sheer, unadulterated, bare-faced swindling, not even our old friend Soapey Sponge could claim to be his superior. Actually, there was very little in it, points of singular similarity characterizing the perfidious activities of them both.

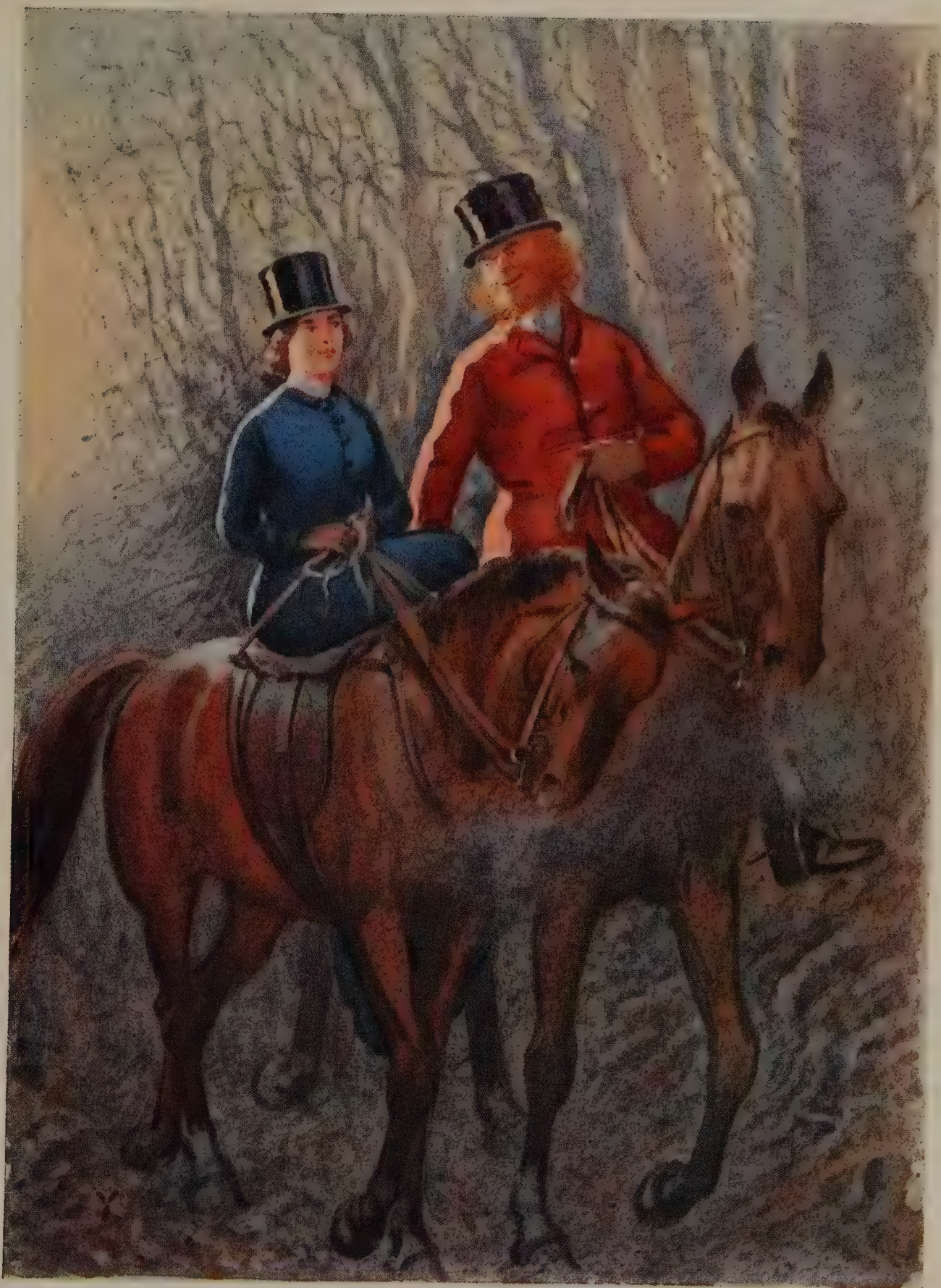
While possessing little or nothing, both posed as men of affluence. Capable horsemen and keen fox-hunters, by imposing on the credulity of human nature, both succeeded in indulging their ardour for the chase, at small cost to themselves. Both secured the use of horses by means of doubtful transactions with shady dealers. And finally, both, bolted to Australia before worse befell.

No explanation has been afforded by Romford's creator as to the name "Facey," so that the reason for its application can only be left to conjecture. But there seems little cause to doubt that the designation was not unconnected with our subject's highly unprepossessing appearance.

Romford—a great, big-boned, hulking, rather ruffianly-looking man—was, at the time of his notorious escapades, between thirty and thirty-five years of age. Standing well over six feet in height, he could boast of tremendous breadth of shoulder, depth of chest and strength of limb, while, consequent upon his addiction to outdoor pursuits, he carried little superfluous flesh. Features of his rough-hewn face were a shaven upper lip beneath a thinnish, rather pointed nose, and little beady eyes, peering inquisitively through a complete circle of unkempt, reddish-coloured hair which stuck out in all directions upon his head as well as round the entire perimeter of his jaw, producing a distinctly apish look.

In the words applied by Whyte-Melville to John Standish Sawyer, hero of *Market Harborough*—words that seem equally applicable to Francis Gilroy Romford—"Altogether, he looks like a man you would rather drink with than fight with, any day. Perhaps, if very fastidious, you might prefer letting him alone, to doing either."

Having, for years, believed himself to be heir to an opulent bachelor uncle, Francis Gilroy, of Queercove Hall, who was also his godfather, and, while awaiting the acquisition of what he judged to be an ample fortune, having done nothing but hunt, shoot and fish, including incidentally a good deal of poaching, his feelings of astonishment and dismay can be imagined on learning, at his uncle's death, that



Facey Romford and Lucy Glitters (alias Mrs. Somerville) returning from hunting

there existed a considerable number of children and their mother, for whose provision the entire Gilroy estate had been bequeathed.

First tidings of the death of his uncle, who, for some time, had been away in London, and the dreadful calamity it revealed, were conveyed to him by the afore-mentioned mother, who lost no time in descending upon Queercove Hall, together with her entire brood of unmistakable little Gilroys. Wandering leisurely with dog and gun about his uncle's estate, Facey espied a heavily-loaded carriage approaching the house, and, speculating as to the occupants and the purpose of the visit, made off with all speed to investigate. 'Hark! sounds of mirth proceed from the parlour, children's voices screaming and shouting.'

"Who the deuce have we here?" muttered Facey, now lost in astonishment. Pushing through the partially opened sash door, he presently stood in the portals of the parlour. A great coarse-looking woman in deep mourning was arranging her crape bonnet, while a perfect sliding scale of children, all clad in black too, were romping and rioting about in a way quite inconsistent with grief.'

"Who are you?" ejaculated Facey, eyeing her intently.'

"And who are you?" demanded she, putting her arms a-kimbo.'

"Me Oncle Gilroy's not at home," ejaculated Facey.'

"Hut, you and your uncle Gilroy! D'ye s'pose I don't know that?" exclaimed she with a hoarse laugh.'

"Well, but who are you?" demanded Facey, bristling up.'

"Who am I!" retorted she. "Who am I! I'm the mistress of this 'ere 'ouse," replied she; "and this is the young Squire," patting a boy on the head, so painfully like Gilroy as to be perfectly ridiculous.'

"The truth flashed upon Facey with terrible velocity. His uncle was dead, and had deceived him.'

"While Facey stood as it were transfixed, the lady had dived into her pocket and fished up a document that he saw at a glance was the will.'

"There!" exclaimed she, flourishing it open, so as to display the well-known Gilroy signature, "there's the writin's. Now have you got anything for to say?" demanded she.'

"I've heard of you, you nasty sneakin' mean-spirited wretch," continued she, "thinkin' to rob me and mine of their dues."'

So poor Facey, overwhelmed by the suddenness and magnitude of the blow, wrecking, as it did, his cherished hopes of a life of luxury with the best of everything at his command, found himself obliged to fall back on his wits, which, fortunately for him, were by no means to be despised as an aid to progress in the old-established, fascinating game of gammon.

Inspiration came to him while gazing into the window of a London saddler's shop, and seeing a man fitting a hunting horn to a saddle. First he thought he would be a saddler, then he thought he would be a sort of master of the horse to a wealthy nobleman, but finally, he hit on the very thing that would serve the double purpose of providing him with board and lodging, while enabling him to

pursue his favourite sport. With a decisive slap of his thigh, he gleefully declared to himself he would be a master of hounds, and from that moment his cares vanished, leaving him in a state of wild excitement at the prospects conjured up by his 'bright idea.'

Facey excelled at building castles in the air. For years, much of his time had been devoted to cogitating on the extent of Uncle Gilroy's fortune, which, in his mind's eye, assumed larger and larger proportions the more he thought of it. Then he would ruminate on a future life of luxury—what horses he would have; how he would indulge, to the full, his mania for sport of all kinds, and so on.

And now, following upon his venturesome decision, fresh dreams of avarice filled his optimistic thoughts to the exclusion of all else.

Of Facey Romford's many unenviable characteristics, greed and cunning were, perhaps, the most outstanding. His little beady eyes were for ever darting here and there, on the look-out for opportunities of gain, which, in consequence of his astonishing ingenuity, were rarely allowed to slip.

Jubilant at his new project, our M.F.H. in embryo strode off to Soapey Sponge's cigar shop, in Jermyn Street, there to convey the startling intelligence and, at the same time, make yet another effort to obtain payment of the "sivin pun ten" owed to him by Soapey, as described in a previous chapter.

Facey's remarkable aptitude for deception showed itself in the advertisement he concocted for the columns of *Bell's Life in London*—'A gentleman, to whom subscription was a secondary consideration, was ready to treat for a country where he could get a little shooting and fishing as well. All communications to be addressed to Francis Romford Esq.' etc. etc.

Nothing could have been further from the truth than Facey's avowed indifference to the matter of subscription, because that, of course, constituted his main objective. But he was cunning enough to realize that the clause would act as tempting bait, and bring eager fish to his hook. Then, negotiations once opened, he could rely on his infallible ingenuity to get what he wanted. He would naturally be taken for a rich man, an assumption that would be strengthened by reference to "Burke," where the following entry appeared:

"Romford, Francis, Esq., J.P. D.L., seat Abbeyfield Park, patron of three livings, crest—a Turbot sitting upon its tail on a cap of dignity."

But this distinguished person was not, of course, our friend Facey, nor, indeed, did any relationship or connection exist between them. The obvious advantages to be gained by the similarity of names, however, proved far too great an attraction for Facey to go out of his way to deny his presumed identity, so, while being careful to abstain from any actual impersonation of his namesake, he gladly allowed the supposition to go unrefuted, thus affording him at once a sound reputation and unlimited credit.

Human nature being what it is, there were, to be sure, certain replies to Facey's advertisement, clearly indicating the applicants' hope of getting their sport for nothing. These, as might be supposed, our impecunious friend brushed ruthlessly aside. Finally, he came to an arrangement with the Heavyside Hunt, whereby,

for a guaranteed subscription of £800 a year, he agreed to hunt their country three days a week, and, having sealed the bargain, Facey at once assumed an attitude of great importance and superiority, regarding the magic letters M.F.H. as a password wherever he went.

'He knew all the ins and outs of management, where to buy meal, where to buy oats, where to buy hay, where to buy everything. Then he would hunt the hounds himself,—do for pleasure what others did for pay.'

Here we must record, with regret, that in order to facilitate his preparations, Facey went so far as to make use of notepaper bearing his namesake's crest, the Turbot on its tail, a specimen of which came into his hands when the other Romford forwarded a dunning letter that he had opened in error. The crest worked wonders with the tradespeople, setting aside any doubts they might have entertained about executing Facey's orders.

Our new master had but a brief career with the Heavyside hounds, but he stayed long enough to make a name for himself as a fearless horseman and an extremely capable huntsman, yet not long enough to be found out.

The cause of his departure was our old friend Lucy Glitters, who, as related elsewhere in these pages, had become Mrs. Sponge. Soapey, having regrettably gone from bad to worse, had recently left poor Lucy and bolted to Australia, so that, when Facey invited her to give him a hand with the H.H., in the temporary absence of his two drunken whips who had smashed themselves up in a gig, she eagerly and delightedly accepted the invitation. And so uncommonly well did she do the job, assisting Facey to show such sport as the Heavysides had never known before, that the admiration of the field knew no bounds.

Unfortunately, on learning of the introduction of a lady whipper-in—and a remarkably pretty one at that—the Heavyside wives were unable to view the situation in the same light as their husbands, and so grave were the suspicions aroused by the association of Romford and Lucy, that, finding his popularity in the field declining as rapidly as malignant gossip increased, Facey deemed it advisable to move. Before going, however, he made the Heavysiders pay for what he regarded as their churlishness, insisting on a full season's subscription for a very small part of one.

Short though his reign had been, he had lost no opportunity of feathering his nest, and as a result of unscrupulous horse-dealing, hound-dealing and every other sort of dealing, found himself, on leaving the Heavysides, better off than he had ever been in his life, with some fifty couple of hounds acquired in drafts from various countries on the strength of the Romford "Turbot."

So that whereas, hitherto, he had possessed nothing of marketable value other than his services, he was now in a position to augment this undeniable commodity with a pack of hounds.

Unlike Sponge who took all he could get and gave nothing, Romford did give some return for what he got, to wit his unquestionable ability to show sport. He seemed gifted with an instinct for hitting off the line of a fox, being conscious of the fact that, just as, in cricket, the bowler seeks to probe into the mind of his

adversary, the batsman, so does the good huntsman try to fathom the mentality of his quarry.

At a check, Facey's invariable practice, while scanning the surrounding country with his little boot-button eyes, was to say to himself: "Francis Romford, if you were the fox, what would you do under these circumstances?" This common-sense method, allied to a natural aptitude for the chase, rarely failed to succeed, so that whatever might have been said of his boorish manners, his rough and ready appearance or his questionable dealings, no one, not even his most malevolent traducers, could deny his consummate ability to make, as Mr. Jorrocks would say, "the foxes cry *capevi*."

Some idea of Facey's methods and capacity as a huntsman may be gleaned from a brief study of his operations with the Heavyside hounds on Lucy's first day as whipper-in.

"You take the high side," said Facey to Lucy, as they now approached the cover, "and blow this whistle if he breaks," continued he, giving her a shrill dog-whistle as he spoke; whereupon Lucy (riding the intractable Leotard) scuttled away up the rough side at the east end of the wood.'

"Cover, hoick!" cried Facey to his hounds, with a slight wave of his arm, and in an instant they were tumbling and scrambling head over heels through the blind fence into the wood. They had not been in cover many minutes, ere old black-and-tan Vanquisher as nearly as possible had old Reynard by the neck. But the fox bounced with a desperate energy that aroused the whole pack; a crash sounded through the wood as they hurried together, while the shrill sound of the whistle presently proclaimed he was gone. Facey got his horse (Brilliant) by the head, and cramming into the ragged fence, cleared the wide water-channel beyond, and forced his way up the wooded bank, regardless alike of stubs, briars, and thorns. Another effort over a broad rail-topped mound, with a yawner on the far side, landed him handsomely on farmer Bushell's fallow, just as the hounds, closely followed by Lucy, were straining over the large grass-field beyond. There was a rare scent. Every hound threw his tongue, making the welkin ring with the melody. The pace presently slackened; hunting became more the order of the day.'

'Facey and Lucy kept their places gallantly. Whatever Facey took, Lucy took; and whatever Lucy took, the young H.H.'s felt constrained to take, for the honour and credit of the hunt.'

Soon the pace mended 'hounds passing handsomely through the deer in Beechborough Park, round Sorrel Hill, past the limekilns at Dewlish, and into Langley Lordship beyond. And here the first check occurred. The fox had been chased by a shepherd's dog, and the mischief was increased by a complication of sheep.'

'Facey sits transfixed, one keen eye watching the hounds, the other raking the country round.'

"Case for a cast," says Facey to himself; and getting his horse by the head, he halloas "Turn them," to Lucy, who forthwith gets round them in a quiet but most masterly manner, and a single twang of Facey's horn, with a crack of her whip,

sent them all flying the way Facey wanted them. He then gave them plenty of swing, letting them use their own sagacity as much as possible, and was rewarded at the end of a semicircular cast by hitting off the scent.'

' "Well done!" "Devilish well done!" "Capitally done!" cried the field, as the hounds dashed over the fence into the turnip-field beyond, and took up the running inside the hedgerow.'

Coming to an exceptionally formidable obstacle, 'for the first time in the run, Facey changed his mind as he approached the fence, turning from a tangled black thorn lapped with mountain ash, to a still more impervious-looking ivy-blind place.'

' "Dash it! but this is a rum customer," said Facey to Lucy, as he stood erect in his stirrups, looking what was on the far side.'

' "Oh, throw your heart over it," said Lucy, "and then follow it as quickly as you can." '

' "Heart!" muttered Facey. "I shall never find it again if I do." '

' "Let *me* try, then," said Lucy, backing Leotard to give him a good run at it. She then put his head straight, gave him a slight touch of the whip and a feel of the spur, and was presently floundering in the thick of the fence.'

' "I thought how it would be," said Facey, jumping off his horse, and running to her assistance. But before he got up, another vigorous effort of the horse extricated her from her difficulties, and landed her in the next field.'

'Romford was presently planted in the midst of the thicket, sitting with his feet out of the stirrups, ready to throw himself off clear if required. It, however, was not necessary, for Brilliant, after many flounders, with a tremendous heave, extricated himself and landed on his nose on the opposite side.'

A little later, hounds were seen 'swinging down the green slope of Rippendale Hill, closely followed by Lucy and Facey.'

'Then there was a burst of enthusiasm (from the field) at the magnificent way the hounds were doing their work, slightly clouded, perhaps, by the sight of the silvery Ribble, meandering its tortuous course through the rich green fields of the vale.'

'Meanwhile, Facey and Lucy had got together, and Facey's keen eye descried the fox taking the water, and floating down the stream so as to land a good way below the taking-off place.'

' "Cunnin' beggar," said Facey, pointing him out to Lucy; "but I'll have you in hand for all that," muttered he.'

' "Yoick, over he goes!" cried Mr. Romford, taking off his hat, as Constance and Cruiser spoke to the scent.'

' "For-rard, away!" cried Facey, turning Brilliant about to have a run at the brook. "Well, how is it to be?" said he to Lucy. "You first or I first?" '

' "Oh, both together," replied Lucy, turning Leotard round also to take it in line.'

' "For-rard! for-rard! for-rard!" cheered Facey, to get his hounds on; but the land was poor and exposed, and the line took a deal of finding.'

‘“Dash it! yonder he goes!” pointing the fox out to Lucy.’

‘“So it is,” replied she.’

‘“Put them on to me, and I’ll give them a lift,” said Facey, pulling out his horn, and clapping spurs to his horse.’

‘As long as Facey viewed the fox, he galloped and blew his horn, and then stopped just at the place where he had seen him last. The hounds then dropped their noses, and quickly hit off the scent on much more favourable ground. Mr. Romford cheers them on, for he is anxious to kill the fox, as well for the credit of his pack as the *éclat* of our fair whipper-in.’

‘He (the fox) gets into a more populous neighbourhood, is headed and bothered, and driven from point to point, until baffled and flurried, he is almost driven into the mouths of the pack. Giving his horse to Lucy, Mr. Romford dives among the worrying hounds, and picks him up.’

‘“WHO-HOOP!” holloas Mr. Romford, holding him on high. “WHO-HOOP!” repeats he with redoubled emphasis. “WHO-HOOP!” shrieked he for the third time. “Dash my buttons if I was ever so pleased at killing a fox in my life!” continued our master, throwing him on to the ground, and proceeding to examine his mouth. “A reg’lar hen-stealin’, goose-gobblin’, turkey-worryin’ old sinner,” announced he, rising, and diving into his long, baggy, black-and-white tartan vest for his knife. Off went the brush, head and pads. “There,” said Mr. Romford, pocketing them, “you’ll do no more mischief.” Then he again raised the now mutilated carcase high in air with both hands, and with a profusion of “Who-hoops,” threw it to the clamorous pack, with an equal profusion of “Worry, worry, worries.”’

‘“Brush is bespoke,” muttered Facey, advancing to Lucy, and decorating Leotard’s head with it. “Better than the baccy-shop, this,” said he, in an undertone, with a knowing wink, as he adjusted it. And Lucy thought of the time when another sportsman (Mr. Sponge) placed a well-won brush in her hat, and sighed.’

Facey’s severance of his connection with the Heavyside hounds necessitated another advertisement, and this time, doubtless due largely to the influence of the “Turbot,” immediate response was forthcoming, the upshot being that in return for a subscription of two thousand a year, he agreed to hunt the Larkspur country, in Doubleimupshire, four days a week.

Needless to say, so eminently gratifying an arrangement, from his own point of view, had not been arrived at without the employment of much ingenuity and astuteness on the part of Romford who, while continuing to pose as a man of affluence, sublimely indifferent to the matter of subscription, bamboozled the Larkspurites into believing that he accepted their offer only so as to preclude any feelings of embarrassment they might have been occasioned by getting their sport entirely at his expense! Who but Facey Romford would have conceived a pretext so astounding, yet at the same time so plausible, and, moreover, have had the temerity to propound it?

Facey was now in clover, and his renting of Beldon Hall from the Viscount Lovetin did nothing to depreciate his spurious reputation for opulence. His lordship, as the name implies, kept his pockets tightly buttoned, and had he known

of Facey's depredations, converting the Beldon Hall coach-houses into kennels and goodness knows what, he would, assuredly, have come scuttling back from Boulogne, whither his mania for saving had attracted him. But for a time, at any rate, he was left in blissful ignorance of the havoc being wrought in his ancestral home by the shameless Facey.

The installation of Lucy as hostess at Beldon Hall was not accomplished without a good deal of demur on the part of Romford, who feared a repetition of the Heavy-side scandal. But when it came to an argument he was no match for Lucy, and finally agreed that, posing as his sister, with the aristocratic name of Mrs. Somerville, she should keep house for him, and that her mother should be sent for to complete the party.

The Beldon establishment consisted of a Mrs. Mustard and her three pretty daughters whose slovenly, untidy appearance and habits had gained for them the unenviable designation of "The Dirties"—Mama, Bridget and Agatha being known as "Dirty No. 1," "Dirty No. 2" and "Dirty No. 3" respectively, while Ruth, the youngest daughter, rejoiced in the title of "Dirtiest of the Dirty."

Now, despite his habitual arrogance and remarkable self-confidence, Romford, on taking Beldon Hall, with no intention of paying a pennyworth of rent if he could help it, became afflicted by doubts as to the wisdom of his adventure. Though inured to bold enterprises, such as few men, however unscrupulous or ruthless, would have attempted, his audacity was tempered with a strong element of caution, especially when his pocket was likely to be affected. Indeed, where money was concerned, caution often developed into veritable meanness.

Lucy, on the other hand, went to the opposite extreme, and though warned by Facey against extravagance, determined to make the most out of her position as the M.F.H.'s "sister" and mistress of Beldon Hall. Obtaining, therefore, from Dirty No. 1 a good supply of coroneted notepaper and the "Beldon Hall" seal, Lucy set to work on the London tradespeople, ordering dresses and all manner of female requirements that in her wildest moments she had never dreamt of possessing. Promptly were her gracious orders attended to, so great was the impression created by seal and coronet.

Facey, too, emboldened by Lucy's happy-go-lucky attitude, as well as by an encouraging message from Lord Lovetin's agent, giving him more or less *carte blanche* to carry out such temporary alterations as he wished, threw aside his doubts and fears and, while continuing to discourage ventures that might have to be paid for, settled down to enjoy his good luck, and to attain all possible profit from his remarkably advantageous situation.

One of his most notable "*temporary alterations*," effected with the aid of a local locksmith, was the breaking open of Lord Lovetin's well-stocked cellar, a piece of monstrous burglary that he passed off with the utmost nonchalance, directing Mrs. Mustard, in the presence of the locksmith, to keep all the bottles so that he might know what to replace before leaving!

Thenceforth, champagne, at Lord Lovetin's expense, became his favourite

lubricator, and the more he drank the less did he bother his head about the future and the possible consequences of his operations.

Our new master had now to set about making all preparations for a start. From the Heavyside country, in addition to fifty couple of hounds, he had brought with him three horses and his two drunken whips, now recovered from their injuries. That was the nucleus of his establishment on arrival at Beldon Hall, when he lost no time in communicating with one Goodhearted Green, a plausible, though utterly unprincipled, horse-dealer of Bagnigge Wells, in the city of London, directing him to supply the needs of his stable with the least possible delay.

‘Goodheart’s great bosom swelled with honest emotion, for he had recently sent away some most remarkable malefactors—horses that kicked, horses that struck, horses that flew at people like tigers, horses that nobody could shoe, horses that nobody could saddle when they were shod, horses that nobody could ride when they were shod and saddled—some very notorious savages, in fact.’

“‘Oh dear! oh dear!’ exclaimed he, stamping his foot and smiting his forehead. “If I had but got this last week, I could have fit him with such a stud as would have astonished the natives.”’

However, eventually the old rogue consigned to Facey half-a-dozen animals, possessing between them quite as many, if not more, vices and defects.

There now descended upon Beldon Hall a perfect avalanche of parcels, packages, and cases, all bearing the imposing inscription “at the Right Honourable Lord Viscount Lovetin’s, Beldon Hall, Doubleimupshire.” These contained the varied requirements of house, stable and kennel, which, needless to say, were obtained on credit, in consequence of the impressive display of “Turbots” and coronets.

Saddles, bridles, breeches, boots, caps, whips, etc., etc., everything needful the trusting London tradesmen gladly and promptly supplied, little dreaming that Facey was anything but what he appeared to be, or that there was any doubt about ultimately getting their money.

Even the two gin-soaked whips, Daniel Swig and Tom Chowey, were rigged out in new scarlet coats, as well as other new adornments, to present so smart an appearance that the closest acquaintances of their former haunts of vice would never have known them.

At last all arrangements were complete for the opening day under Facey’s mastership, and as he set forth with his hounds and his retinue in all the glory of achievement, his glow of satisfaction and pleasure can well be imagined. Yet triumphant though he felt, his suspicious little beady eyes kept darting here and there, searching the assembly for anyone who might possibly give him away—one of the Heavysiders for instance. However, his misgivings proved superfluous, as did the very natural anxiety he must surely have experienced that things should go well on this, his first day in the Larkspur country. There appeared no spectre at the feast, and the day’s sport fulfilled Facey’s fondest hopes. Riding the tear-away “Pull-Devil-Pull-Baker,” he showed the Larkspurites how to cut across country, taking

everything as it came, including a swollen stream which he negotiated like a water-rat, and even their crack rider, Captain Spurrier, was forced to admit that the new master 'was just about the hardest rider he had ever seen. He didn't seem to care a halfpenny for anything. All he looked to was being with his hounds. Brooks, banks, walls, woods, all seemed equally indifferent to him.'

As a huntsman, Romford proved his worth at finding, hunting and killing a fox, his operations from start to finish leaving little, if any, room for criticism. 'And he smoked his pipe, and played the flute with great glee, at Beldon Hall, that evening; telling Lucy and her mamma that he had given his new friends a "*deuce of a dustin*.'"

Facey hated going out at night to dinner parties and such-like entertainments, preferring to stay at home, soused in one of Lord Lovetin's comfortable chairs, the extremities of his long tweed-clothed legs, encased in slippers, resting on the fender, his foul pipe polluting the atmosphere of Beldon Hall's elegant, richly caparisoned drawing-room.

Thus let us imagine him lounging one evening, with Lucy close by engaged in darning his socks, when an invitation to dine and sleep arrived from the neighbouring mansion of Dalberry Lees, seat of one Willy Watkins, who in his youth had gone out to the diggings in Australia and, besides acquiring a considerable fortune, had married the daughter of a transported forger. Facey made every possible excuse for getting out of it, but he, again, found himself no match for Lucy, who, being anxious to go herself, successfully countered his every plea. 'The women bothered him. He didn't know what to say to them. He didn't know how to get them in to dinner. He didn't know how to get them out again.'

' "All very well," muttered he (during subsequent instruction from Lucy) "tellin' one there's nothin' to do after; it's very much like tellin' a man there's nothin' on the other side of the fence, when perhaps there's a great yawnin' ditch big enough to hold both him and his horse." '

'But Lucy combated all the objections. She would tell him what to say; she would tell him what to do.'

And so, of course, they went. Without Lucy at his elbow to put him right, Facey's manners at the Dalberry Lees dinner were somewhat reminiscent of Mr. Jorrocks's display of off-hand vulgarity, when dining with Mr. and Mrs. Muleygrubs at Cockolorum Hall.

Finding himself seated between his hostess and her daughter, Cassandra Cleopatra, " "rot it," thought Romford, "but I shall be talked to death between you." '

' "Humph! I thought it had been a dinner," observed he, in a tone of disappointment, to his hostess; "but there seems nuthin' but fruit and things, like a flower-show." '

Asked whether he would prefer thick or clear soup, " "thick," replied Facey, thinking it would be the most substantial of the two.' " "Here! give us both!" exclaimed he, seeing how little there was in the plate he had got. He then took

the other and placed it in front of him until he was done with the first. And he supped and slushed just like one of his own hounds.'

In answer to Cassandra's inquiry as to whether he approved of women hunting, he bluntly replied: "'No—hate it, dangerous enough for the men, besides, they're always gettin' in the way.'" And again, to a footman offering him food: "'No, ye beggar! I don't want any more!'" growled he.'

Then he became interested in the appearance of his younger neighbour.

"'Good-looking lass," thought he, examining her minutely behind. "Good head and neck, good shoulders"; just as he would look at a horse. And at that moment a thought struck him that she might be his——'

"'Cream or water ice, sir?" now asked a footman.'

"'Who said I wanted either?" growled Facey.'

Later, in the privacy of his own room, soliloquizing on the events of the evening, aided by the comforting fumes of his eternal pipe:

"'Well," mused he to himself, as he puffed and smoked; "well, old boy, you are well laid in here—that white-shouldered girl is evidently in love with you! Quite inclined to meet you half-way, old gal!"'

Not only did Lucy succeed in inducing Romford to accept similar invitations to neighbouring houses, but, by means of judicious cajolery, gained his rather grudging consent to some entertaining at home. Knowing his close-fisted tendencies, she made out that it would be nothing more than tea and sandwiches for a few friends. At first Facey was inclined to jib at the sandwiches, suggesting that what he called rabbit-poie and cheese would be cheaper. But Lucy soon talked him over, and then, assisted by her stage friend, Betsey Shannon—Miss Hamilton Howard for the time being—set about making the arrangements, which day by day grew more and more ambitious. The tea and sandwiches became an "at home," which in turn developed into a ball with an elaborate supper supplied by expensive London caterers.

All this was contrived behind Facey's back, and it was not until his return from hunting on the evening of the entertainment that he began to get wind of something more than tea and sandwiches being afoot. Lucy and her friend tried to calm his fears with all sorts of humbug, a good deal of which amounted to flagrant falsehood, but our astute friend would hardly have been taken in by such obvious gammon or have assumed, as he did, a happy-go-lucky attitude of "in for a penny in for a pound," without the soothing, inspiring influence of Lord Lovetin's good wine, which did far more than either Lucy or Betsey could have accomplished towards promoting in Romford a frame of mind inimical to his customary niggardly wariness.

But, of course, such impudent imposture as the proceedings at Beldon Hall could not endure indefinitely, and, at length, Nemesis, in the person of Lord Lovetin, descended upon the conspirators.

Walking into the house and coming, unannounced, upon Facey and Lucy enjoying their evening leisure before the drawing-room fire:

"'Beg pardon," said he, "but I thought it was Mr. Romford."'

“Romford it is,” said Facey, yawning, and stretching out his great arms as if to show the intruder what he had to contend with.’

“But not the Romford I was at school with,” observed his lordship, eyeing him intently.’

“Don’t know who you are, to begin with,” replied Facey, “but moy name’s Romford,” observed he, “*that oi’ll swear to.*” ’

“I’m Lord Lovetin,” replied his lordship, mildly.’

‘The more his lordship saw, the less he liked what had been going on. The place was indeed in shocking confusion; everything converted into what it was not intended for. Betsey’s old brass-eyed Balmorals stuffed into the richly-carved Indian cabinet; a statuary marble figure of Psyche crowned with Facey’s ten-penny wide-awake; and Mrs. Somerville’s dirty goloshes tucked under the arm of a companion figure of Cupid.’

Now, although the exposure of Facey Romford’s deception caused the majority of his neighbours to turn against him, Cassandra Cleopatra’s family steadfastly refused to believe the scurrilous stories anent the goings-on at Beldon Hall, and remained true to its supposed opulent tenant whom Willy Watkins and his match-making wife both looked upon as a prospective son-in-law. ‘They didn’t want to hear anything against Mr. Romford. They wouldn’t hear anything against Mr. Romford. They begged that nobody would trouble themselves to tell them anything against Mr. Romford. The world was made up of spite and ill-nature, and people generally spoke from an interested motive. Lord Lovetin was a notorious screw, and doubtless wanted to cheat Mr. Romford’ and so on.

So that what with Facey relying on the Watkins interests in Australia, and Cassandra maintaining faith in the wealthy Mr. Romford of Beldon Hall, wedding bells were soon set a-ringing. But scarcely had their last echoes died away, than both bride and bridegroom were disagreeably reminded of the fact that things are not always what they seem, and not until it was too late did they suffer disillusionment.

For news from Australia had revealed the wreck of Willy’s fortune, owing to mismanagement by his ex-forger father-in-law; while Cassandra, for her part, was at last obliged to accept the assertion that Facey, far from being the Romford he pretended to be—owner of Abbeyfield Park, patron of three livings, J.P., D.L., etc., etc.—was, in reality, nothing but a worthless impostor.

However, they both decided there was nothing for it but to make the best of their bargain. So, collecting all they could gather from available resources, they followed friend Sponge’s example and set sail for Australia, where a little later they were joined by Lucy (Mrs. Somerville that was) who, as already recorded, became reunited with the errant Soapey, now on his feet again after acquiring quite a little fortune out of nuggets.

By tacit agreement the reprehensible activities at Beldon Hall were never discussed, and knowing what we do of them, that was, perhaps, just as well.

Even the one-time burning subject of Sponge’s “sivin-pund-ten” debt to Romford seemed to have been dropped.

As to the subsequent fortunes of this strange quartette, no record is extant. But it may safely be assumed that, with the combined ingenuity of Romford and Sponge, allied to Lucy's irresistible charm and Cassandra's family connections in Australia—transported connections though they were—their prosperity was assured.

And there we must leave our friend Facey to his fate, remembering—in obedience to the precept:

“Be to his faults a little blind
And to his virtues ever kind.”

—his fine horsemanship, his bold riding to hounds, his consummate ability as a huntsman, and his claim to the gratitude of those who enjoyed the sport he rarely failed to show; while generously trying to forget the other side of the picture portrayed in this chapter.

CHAPTER VII

MR. JAWLEYFORD OF JAWLEYFORD COURT

(References are to *Mr. Sponge's Sporting Tour*.)

OF more aristocratic lineage than the general run of Surtees characters, Mr. Jawleyford of Jawleyford Court, unlike most of his acquaintances who considered him a person of little account, thought himself a very great man indeed.

In appearance he was tall and slender, with a fine figure well-suited to the dandified style of dress he invariably affected. His well-shaped head, surmounted by an abundance of grey-shot auburn hair, might well have led strangers into the mistaken belief that it indicated intelligence, until on closer acquaintance they realized their misconception. Somewhat aquiline features, flanked by bushy whiskers, descended to a long rather scraggy neck, its thinness accentuated as a rule by a tight, black satin cravat.

Doubtless with a view to impressing his neighbours, he habitually wore, in the depths of the country, clothes appropriate for London at the height of the season. Long, flowing frock-coats, expansive satin stocks, elaborately embroidered waistcoats and tightly-fitting trousers, usually strapped under his thin, foppish boots.

Of the many humbugs created by Surtees, few could be found to approach the squire of Jawleyford Court in shameless hypocrisy.

He was constantly posing and trying to impress people with his importance, his generosity, his hospitable inclinations, his appearance, his opulence, and so on; but being possessed of only a moderate amount of that useful commodity known as intelligence, he failed to deceive even the most credulous for any length of time.

Inordinately fond of display, provided the cost was not proportionately extensive, he dearly loved to pretend he was everything a landlord and a country squire should be, including many things that he palpably was not.

He liked, for instance, to be thought hospitable, and with this end in view, lavishly threw out invitations as though Jawleyford Court were a sort of open house, with an endless stream of guests coming and going, instead of the dull hermitage that, in reality, it proved to be.

Jawleyford never entertained if he could help it, his invitations being of the promiscuous kind, issued with a fervent inward prayer that he would not be taken at his word. Yet for the purposes of establishing a reputation for generous, open-handed hospitality, he almost overwhelmed people with the apparent sincerity of his entreaties, begging and beseeching them not to disappoint him.

“Well, now,” he would say, “we shall be at home all September, and up to the middle of October, and you must just come to us at your own time. Now,

my good fellow, say the word; *do* say you'll come, and then it will be a settled thing, and I shall look forward to it with such pleasure!"'

Usually that was the end of the matter, as Jawleyford hoped it would be, most people being rather diffident about accepting invitations couched in such vague terms. Not so our old friend Soapey Sponge, however, and it was a bad day for Jawleyford when he happened to meet, at Laverick Wells, so worthy an opponent in the art of humbugging. Little did he imagine, when pouring out his usual hypocritical rubbish upon the crafty Sponge, that here was a man without a vestige of diffidence in his make-up, one, indeed, who would lose little time in taking full advantage of the offer.

"“Mr. Sponge,” said he (at Laverick Wells), getting him by both hands, and shaking them as though he could not bear the idea of separation; “my dear Mr. Sponge,” added he, “I *grieve* to say we’re going to-morrow. But, however, I won’t say adieu, no, I *won’t* say adieu! I live, as you perhaps know, in one of the best hunting countries in England—my Lord Scamperdale’s—Scamperdale and I are like brothers; I can do whatever I like with him—he has, I may say, the finest pack of hounds in the world. Come, then, my dear fellow, and see us; we will do whatever we can to entertain and make you comfortable. Scamperdale shall keep our side of the country till you come; there are capital stables at Lucksford, close to the station, and you shall have a stall for your hack at Jawleyford, and a man to look after him, if you like; so now, don’t say nay—your time shall be ours—we shall be at home all the rest of the winter, and I flatter myself, if you once come down, you will be inclined to repeat your visit; *at least, I hope so.*”’

Normally so astute, Sponge was inclined to be impressed with Jawleyford’s hearty effusiveness, though, to be sure, it would have mattered not a jot to Soapey had he thought otherwise, for to him an invitation, whether sincere or the reverse, was still an invitation, and not to be lightly cast aside.

In this particular matter of hospitality there were two distinct Jawleyfords, one who issued liberal invitations, and the other who received acceptances.

We have seen something of the first, so that it now remains to portray the second.

Soon after returning home from Laverick Wells, Jawleyford was sitting at breakfast, reading his letters, when his wife became startled by an explosion on the part of her lord and master.

““*Curse the fellow!*” exclaimed Jawleyford, nearly choking himself with a fish bone. “*Curse the fellow!*” he repeated, stamping the letter (from Mr. Sponge) under foot, as though he would crush it to atoms. “Who ever saw such a piece of impudence as that!”’

““What’s the matter, my dear?” inquired Mrs. Jawleyford, alarmed lest it was her dunning jeweller writing again.’

““*Matter!*” shrieked Jawleyford.’ “*Matter!*” repeated he, as though he had got his *coup de grace*; “look *there*,” added he, handing over the letter.’

This contained a brief announcement of Sponge’s imminent descent upon Jawleyford Court.

““Oh, my dear,” rejoined Mrs. Jawleyford, soothingly, as soon as she saw it



Mr. Jawleyford of Jawleyford Court in his very striking hunting kit

was not what she expected. "Oh, my dear, I'm sure there's nothing to make you put yourself so much out of the way." "

"No!" roared Jawleyford, determined not to be done out of his grievance.'

"No!" repeated he; "*do you call that nothing?*" "

"Why, nothing to make yourself unhappy about," replied Mrs. Jawleyford, rather pleased than otherwise.'

"Well," said Jawleyford, with a toss of the head and a shrug of resignation, "you'll have me in gaol; I see that." "

"Nay, my dear J.," rejoined his wife; "I'm sure you've plenty of money." "

"*Have I!*" ejaculated Jawleyford. "Do you suppose, if I had, I'd have left Laverick Wells without paying Miss Bustlebey, or given a bill at three months for the house-rent?" "

On Jawleyford complaining that 'he had no idea of people writing in that sort of way, saying they were coming, without giving him the chance of saying no.'

"Well, but my dear, I daresay you asked him," observed Mrs. Jawleyford. "I've often told you that you shouldn't be so free with your invitations if you don't want people to come." "

"Well, but confound him, I didn't ask his horses," exclaimed Jawleyford; "nor will I have them either." "

A very different attitude to the cordial, friendly, warm-hearted manner in which he had almost pestered Sponge to pay them a visit.

But on Sponge's arrival, the old humbug reverted to the Laverick Wells pose, more especially as gossip had credited Soapey with possessing a very considerable fortune, and his avaricious host thought he might, perhaps, do for one of the girls, Amelia or Emily.

From the warmth of his greeting, no one would have suspected that the tempestuous scene at breakfast that morning had been brought about by Sponge's letter announcing his advent later in the day.

"My dear Mr. Sponge!—I am delighted to see you!" exclaimed Mr. Jawleyford. "This is, indeed, most truly kind of you," continued he, advancing to meet him; and getting our friend by both hands, he began working his arms up and down like the under man in a saw-pit. "This is, indeed, most truly kind," he repeated; "I assure you I shall never forget it. It's just what I like—it's just what Mrs. Jawleyford likes—it's just what we *all* like—coming without fuss or ceremony!" "

Continuing through the distressingly long list of Jawleyford's less delectable characteristics, we regret to say that besides being an arrant snob, he was inconceivably vain and a great boaster. Large portraits of himself, in striking attitudes, adorned the walls of "the Court," as he called it, and were invariably positioned where they would be most likely to catch the eye.

Thus, on being ushered into his bedroom by Jawleyford to dress for dinner, Sponge at once found himself confronted with a large portrait of his host above the fireplace.

"Ah! here you are," observed Mr. Jawleyford, giving the candle a flourish, to show the size of the room, and draw it back on the portrait of himself. "Ah!

I declare here's an old picture of myself," said he, holding the candle up to the face, as if he hadn't seen it for some time, (actually he had, himself, been dusting it that same afternoon in preparation for the guest's inspection)—"a picture that was done when I was in the Bumperkin Yeomanry," continued he, passing the light before the facings. "That was considered a good likeness at the time," said he, looking affectionately at it, and feeling his nose to see if it was still the same size; "ours was a capital corps—one of the best, if not the very best in the service. The inspecting officer always spoke of it in the highest possible terms—especially of *my* company, which really was just as perfect as anything my Lord Cardigan, or any of your crack disciplinarians, can produce." "

There being no hunting next day and as it poured with rain, Jawleyford had a golden opportunity of showing off his treasures to his weather-bound guest, and dilating upon their immense value.

"This is my celebrated 'Diana,' by Noindon," exclaimed he, laying his hand on a life-size bust, in Italian marble, "one of the finest things in the world. Louis Philippe sent an agent over to this country expressly to buy it." "

"Why didn't you sell it him?" asked Sponge.'

"Didn't want the money," replied Jawleyford, "didn't want the money." "

"And this," laying his hand on the crown of a much-frizzed, barber's-window-looking bust, "of course you know?" "

"No, I don't," replied Sponge.'

"Look again, my dear fellow; you *must* know it," observed Jawleyford.'

"I suppose it's meant for you," at last replied Sponge, seeing his host's anxiety.'

"*Meant!* my dear fellow; why, don't you think it like?" "

"Why, yes, it's like," replied Sponge, seeing which way his host wanted it; "it's like, certainly; the want of expression in the eye makes such a difference between a bust and a picture." "

"True," replied Jawleyford, comforted—"true," repeated he, looking affectionately at it; "I should say it was very like—like as anything can be." "

"That's another of me," continued Jawleyford, pointing to a bust above the fireplace. "That portrait up there," pointing to a portrait of himself attitudinising, with his hand on his hip, and frock-coat well thrown back, so as to show his figure and the silk lining to advantage, "was done the other day, by a very rising young artist; though he has hardly done me justice perhaps." "

"What book is it you are pointing to?" asked Sponge.'

"It's not a book," replied Mr. Jawleyford, "it's a plan—a plan of this gallery, in fact. I am supposed to be giving the final order for the erection of the very edifice we are now in." "

"And a very handsome building it is," observed Sponge, thinking he would make it a shooting-gallery.'

"Yes, it's a handsome thing in its way," assented Jawleyford; "better if it had been water-tight, perhaps," added he, as a big drop splashed upon the crown of his head.'

"The contents must be very valuable," observed Sponge.'

“*Very* valuable,” replied Jawleyford.’

“There’s a thing I gave two hundred and fifty guineas for—that vase. Those fine monkeys in Dresden china, playing on musical instruments, were forty; those bronzes of scaramouches were seventy; that or-molu clock was eighty; those Sèvres vases were a hundred. The pictures I should think are most valuable. My friend Lord Sparklebury said to me the last time he was here:

“‘Jawleyford, old boy,’ said he, for we are very intimate—just like brothers, in fact; ‘Jawleyford, old boy, I wonder whether your collection or mine would fetch most money. I’d like to give you a good round sum to pick out half-a-dozen pictures out of your gallery.’”

‘Jawleyford then took him and worked him through his collection, and put Sponge here and there and everywhere to catch the light (or rain as the case might be); made him convert his hand into an opera-glass, and occasionally put his head between his legs to get an upside-down view—a feat that Sponge’s equestrian experience made him pretty well up to.’

At last, the appearance of Spigot, the butler, to announce luncheon, brought welcome release to poor Soapey from his long drawn out ordeal.

That Jawleyford was anything but popular in the neighbourhood can well be imagined, and when, on rare occasions, he reluctantly felt obliged to entertain, innumerable invitations had to be sent out, before the required number of acceptances could be collected. And even some of those who accepted were liable to succeed in finding an eleventh-hour excuse to stay away, for Jawleyford being a notorious skinflint, his dinners were no more attractive than he was himself.

Let us take as an example a dinner party, arranged in honour of Soapey Sponge’s visit. Assembled in the drawing-room, a little before the hour of dinner, are Mr. Sponge and the two Jawleyford girls, when in bursts the master of the house in a frantic state of perplexity and agitation.

“Well, this is too bad!” exclaimed he, stamping and flourishing a scented note. “This is *too bad*,” repeated he; “people accepting invitations, and then crying off at the last moment.”

“Who is it can’t come, papa?” asked Emily.’

“*The Blossomnoses!*” replied he, with an emphasis.’

“Why, that’s four,” observed Emily.’

“To be sure it is,” replied Jawleyford; “five, if you count them by appetites; for old Blossom always eats and drinks as much as two people. However, the invitation shall go for a dinner, all the same.”

Nor was this the end of the cry-offs, for there now arrived the bearer of more vexatious tidings, in the person of Robert Foozle, who, Surtees tells us, ‘was the hope of the house of Foozle; and it was fortunate his parents were satisfied with him, for few other people were.’

Robert was an exceedingly simple young man, whose appearance did nothing to afford a favourable impression. Lank, straight hair fell untidily about a round, plump face, whose brick-red cheeks bulged in conformity with his ample waist-line.

Among other peculiarities, young Foozle, who never disagreed with anybody

about anything, invariably answered questions by including in his replies the exact words of the interrogator.

Thus, when asked, on his arrival 'if his papa and mama were not coming,' he replied, "No, my papa and mama are not coming."

"The deuce!" exclaimed Jawleyford, stamping his foot; adding, "it never rains but it pours."

"Have you any note, or anything?" asked Mrs. Jawleyford, who had followed Robert Foozle into the room.

"Yes, I have a note," replied he, diving into the inner pocket of his coat and producing one.

This, Mrs. Jawleyford put away in her bag, saying 'that she hoped Mr. and Mrs. Foozle were well.'

"Yes, they are well," replied Robert, notwithstanding he had express orders to say that his papa had the tooth-ache, and his mama the ear-ache.

Consequent upon the defection of Blossomnoses and Foozles, the remnants, six in number, had the depressing experience of sitting down to a table laid for twelve.

Following an exceedingly dull dinner, Jawleyford, Sponge and Robert Foozle, a strangely assorted trio, sat over their port.

Said Soapey to Robert:

"Are you fond of hunting?"

"Yes, I'm fond of hunting," replied Foozle.

"But you *don't* hunt, you know, Robert," observed Jawleyford.

"No, I don't hunt," replied Robert.

In the ensuing discussion, Jawleyford who, thanks to the influence of a generous allowance of wine, had, by this time, recovered his spirits, referred to 'the charms of the chase—the good fellowship it produced'—its advantages 'to the country in a national point of view, promoting as it did a spirit of manly enterprise, and encouraging our unrivalled breed of horses; both of which he looked upon as national objects, well worthy the attention of enlightened men like himself.'

Finally Jawleyford, knowing his Robert, and determined not to put up another bottle, formulated his inquiry as to whether he would have any more port, in such a way as to preclude the possibility of anything but a refusal.

"I suppose you'll not take any more wine?" inquired Jawleyford.

"No, I'll not take any more wine," replied Foozle.

Later on, in the drawing-room, when the clocks had struck eleven and no signs of any move on the part of Robert had been apparent, Jawleyford, thinking it high time he went, tried him with a broad hint about staying all night. But his young friend's skin proved to be tougher than he expected, for, to his infinite disgust, Foozle monotonously replied:

"Yes, I think I'd better stay all night."

Finding himself cornered, Jawleyford made desperate efforts to rectify his mistake.

"But won't they be expecting you at home, Robert?" asked he.

"Yes, they'll be expecting me at home," replied Foozle.

"Then, perhaps, you had better not alarm them by staying," suggested Jawleyford.

‘“No, perhaps, I’d better not alarm them by staying,” repeated Foozle,’ clearly to the intense relief of his host.

Jawleyford, attired for hunting, was a spectacle that had to be seen to be believed. Why he should have thought it proper to dress as though for a military parade is not easy to understand.

Yet his very curious costume was strongly suggestive of martial activities, while, in certain less conspicuous details, sporting inclinations were denoted.

Starting from the top, upon his frizzy head sat the green and gold forage-cap of that distinguished corps, the Bumperkin Yeomanry. His emaciated neck, swathed in the tightest of black satin stocks, emerged from the cavernous depths of a highly-arched velvet collar, surmounting a green swallow-tailed coat, bearing the button of the extinct Muggeridge hunt. His waistcoat of light blue, emblazoned with foxes, met a pair of rhubarb-coloured overalls, strapped under highly-polished, heavily-spurred, extremely thin ‘Wellingtons.’ Yellow gloves and a lady-like, silver-mounted switch completed what was, surely, the most amazing outfit ever to have adorned the person of a fox-hunter.

Sponge, who prided himself on the correctness of his turn-out, could scarcely conceal his astonishment when meeting his host in the hall, on the morning following the disastrous Foozle dinner-party, just before starting together for Scrambleford Green, the appointed meeting-place of Lord Scamperdale’s hounds.

Though professing to be so ardent a supporter of fox-hunting, Jawleyford displayed singular ignorance of the sport, its phraseology, its usages, in fact everything to do with it.

Bucketing his old worn-out horse along the very middle of the hard road, he sat bolt upright, with a straight-legged military seat, his chin-strap flopping up and down, his coat-tails flying out behind, his right arm akimbo.

Approaching the meet, they were spotted by the eagle-eye of Jack Spraggon, Lord Scamperdale’s henchman.

‘“That ass Jawleyford, as I live!” exclaimed Jack.’

‘“So it is!” said Lord Scamperdale; “the confounded *humbug!*” ’

But on Jawleyford’s arrival, it became evident that he was not the only humbug present, so changed was his lordship’s attitude.

‘“Ah, Jawleyford, my dear fellow, I’m delighted to see you,” exclaimed Lord Scamperdale, extending a hand as he spoke.’

‘“Jack, here, told me that he saw your flag flying as he passed, and I said what a pity it was but I’d known before; for Jawleyford, said I, is a *real* good fellow, one of the *best* fellows, I know, and has asked me to dine so often that I’m almost ashamed to meet him; and it would have been such a nice opportunity to have volunteered a visit, the hounds being here, you see.” ’

‘“Oh, that’s so kind of your lordship,” exclaimed Jawleyford, quite delighted.’ And a little later:

‘“Is your friend What’s-his-name, a workman?” asked Lord Scamperdale, nodding towards Sponge as he trotted Hercules gently past.’

‘“Oh, no,” replied Jawleyford, tartly. “Oh, no—gentleman; man of property——” ’

“I did not mean was he a mechanic,” explained his lordship drily, “but a workman; a good ’un across country, in fact.”

“Oh, a first-rate man!—*first-rate man!*” replied Jawleyford; “beat them all at Laverick Wells.”

Then, at the cover-side:

“*Tally-ho!*” screamed Jawleyford, hoisting the Bumperkin Yeomanry cap in the air. “*Tally-ho!*” repeated he, looking triumphantly round, as much as to say, “What a clever boy am I!”

“*Hold your noise!*” roared Jack. “Don’t you see it’s a *hare?*” added he, amidst the uproarious mirth of the company.

“I haven’t your great staring specs on, or I should have seen he hadn’t a tail,” retorted Jawleyford, nettled at the tone in which Jack had addressed him.

“Tail be damned!” replied Jack, with a sneer; “who but a tailor would call it a tail?”

At times, Jawleyford carried his shamming and pretence to the most astonishing lengths, demonstrating his incurable weakness for the gentle art of deception. For instance, when threatened with a visit from Jack Spraggon, whom he cordially detested, he feigned illness and, presumably to impress the household with the “genuine” nature of his ailment, while justifying his action in putting Spraggon off, he attired himself in a dressing-gown and slippers, wrapped his head in a handkerchief, sat in an arm-chair by the fire and assumed, not without a fair measure of success, the appearance and demeanour of a sufferer.

But next day, despite all his plans and scheming to avoid the dreaded visit, Jawleyford who, believing the danger to be passed, had discarded the paraphernalia of an invalid, was suddenly startled by the spectacle of a gig coming up the drive towards the house, and, as it got nearer, his surprise gave way to horror, on identifying one of the occupants as Lord Scamperdale’s hated henchman.

“*Spraggon, as I live!*” exclaimed he, as he caught Jack’s harsh, spectacled features.

“Well, that beats everything!” exclaimed Jawleyford, burning with rage.

Frantically he dashed upstairs and, quickly resuming the apparel appropriate to a sick-room, sent down a message that—“he was very sorry, but he was so unwell that he was quite unable to see anyone.”

Jawleyford’s last deed of which a record exists, showed him in a rather more favourable light than usual, for he was the first to offer comfort and consolation to Lord Scamperdale in his desperate grief at Jack Spraggon being killed in a steeplechase, hurrying him off to Jawleyford Court from the scene of the sad catastrophe.

Yet, even this act of compassion was, perhaps, not entirely disinterested, for, having, so it seems, long cherished hopes that one day either Amelia or Emily might become her ladyship, would not so confirmed a snob feel that now was the time to give the unhappy nobleman every opportunity of realizing the obvious advantages of marriage as a cure for his distress and his loneliness?

In the end, what with the Scamperdale coronet and the Puffington riches, our Bumperkin Yeoman may be said to have been highly successful in his match-making activities.

CHAPTER VIII

BENJAMIN BRADY

(References are to *Handley Cross* and *Hillingdon Hall*.)

IT has always been something of a mystery as to why a normally discerning person like Mr. Jorrocks should have taken into his employ so incorrigible a young rascal as Benjamin Brady; and, moreover, why, with abundant justification for his summary dismissal, he persisted in retaining the services of a creature so utterly worthless.

Of Benjamin's origin we know nothing, but there seems little doubt that he graduated in the gutters of East London, where he proved an apt pupil in the study of lying, thieving, deceitfulness and kindred vices.

Cunning as a fox, twisty as a weasel, plentifully endowed with cockney sharpness, he, at one time or another, served Mr. Jorrocks, albeit indifferently, in three capacities, first and always as a boy-of-all-work, augmented at Handley Cross by the duties of whipper-in, and at Hillingdon Hall by those of J.P.'s clerk.

At the time of Benjamin's introduction by Surtees in *Handley Cross*, he was an unwholesome-looking, pasty-faced youth, with straight, pale-coloured hair, untidily festooned about his unprepossessing countenance. Excessive recourse to the gin bottle had stunted his growth and contributed to the frailty of his physique. He was up to every conceivable kind of mischief, and when brought to book, never at a loss for an excuse, good, bad, or indifferent. Rarely was he caught red-handed, but there are on record one or two instances where unforeseen circumstances, that even his innate cunning had not allowed for, brought upon his head just retribution, and upon a more malleable part of his anatomy painful castigation.

One Sunday morning, turning back unexpectedly on his way to church, Mr. Jorrocks found Benjamin, or Bijnjimin as he called him, lounging in his (Mr. Jorrocks's) chair at the vacated breakfast-table reading *Bell's Life in London*, and helping himself out of the marmalade pot with a remarkably grimy thumb—an unfortunate error of judgment that resulted in consequences exceedingly distressing to Benjamin.

Then there was the occasion when, early one morning, James Pigg, Mr. Jorrocks's huntsman, came upon Ben and another young scamp, galloping his master's horses on the hard high road. 'Not all Pigg's frantic yells could overpower the clatter they made on the road. Pigg therefore made the best of his way home and providing himself with a cutting whip, surprised Ben in the parlour in the act of refreshing himself with some of Mr. Jorrocks's marmalade, which he was scooping out of the pot with his thumb. Taking him as he would a hound by the ear, Pigg pitched into him, exclaiming at the top of his voice—"Ar'll teach ye te gallop mar h'ussus,"

(whack—crack—smack). Squeak, squeal, writhe, wriggle, roar, went Ben, throwing himself on to the floor.'

"'Ar'll teach ye te steal t'ard maister's marmelade,'" continued Pigg, now taking Ben by the scruff of the neck, (crack—smack—whack). Writhe, roar, wriggle, *murder!* shrieked Ben.'

"'Aye, *morder* aye,'" repeated Pigg, turning him deliberately over and taking him by the other ear. "Aye, *morder* aye, ar'll morder ye, ye bit brazen bowdekite, whe d'ye think 'ill stand sic wark as this," (whack, crack—whack, crack—whack, crack.)'

Naturally, when Benjamin found himself suddenly translated from Great Coram Street to the fashionable spa and hunting centre of Handley Cross, and transformed from a London urchin into a whipper-in, he had much to learn. Nevertheless his ignorance, to say nothing of his dislike, of everything pertaining to fox-hunting was quite astonishing.

There was, for instance, the somewhat startling sequel to a lecture, delivered by Mr. Jorrocks to Benjamin on his new duties.

"'You are hentering upon a most momentous crisis,'" said he. "'If you apply yourself diligently and assiduously to your callin', and learn to be useful in kennel, and to cheer the 'ounds with a full melodious voice—such a voice, in fact, as the tall lobster-merchant, that comes along our street of a still evenin', with his basket on his 'ead, cryin' *LOB-sters!* fine *LOB-sters!* has, there is no sayin' but in course of time you may arrive at the distinguished 'onour of readin' an account of your doin's in *Bell's Life* or the *Field*; but if you persist in playing at marbles, chuck farthin', and flyin' kites, 'stead of attendin' in the stable, I'll send you back to the charity school from whence you came, where you'll be rubbed down twice a day with an oak towel, and kept on chick-weed and grunsell like a canary bird,—mark my words if I von't."'

Not long after propounding these words of wisdom, Mr. Jorrocks was horrified to see Benjamin galloping along the hard road in the wake of the hounds, shouting at the top of his voice: "'Buy *LOB-ster-r!* fine *LOB-ster-r-r!*"'

"'The bouzy seems to take no interest in the thing,'" wrote Jorrocks in his journal. "'Fear all the lickin' in the world von't drive a passion for the chase into him. Threatened to cut his coat into ribbons on his back, if he didn't look lively."'

In another entry, considerably later, he wrote:

"'Batsey brought up shavin' water, saying Binjimin wished to be excused 'unting, havin' got the gout. All moonshine, I daresay! Boy has no passion for the chase. What business has a boy like him with the gout? Only for rear admirals, town counsellors, and such like cocks."'

Ben's experiences on one of his first hunting days did nothing to promote in him enthusiasm for the sport. To start with his slumbers were violently interrupted at daybreak when Mr. Jorrocks emptied a cascade of cold water upon his tousled head, as he lay snoring in his little box of a bed in the attic.

Later in the day, mounted on Xerxes, the luckless Ben, bellowing as though he



Benjamin taking advantage of his master's absence at church

were being murdered, was carried at full gallop through a dense cover, and over a high stone wall out of it. Xerxes, with the bit in his teeth, sailed away as he pleased, the new whipper-in having no more control than, as Surtees expressed it, 'a monkey on a poodle.'

Shot on to his horse's neck by the leap out of cover, Ben, his unattractive face not improved by scratches, miraculously managed to scramble back into the saddle, but his troubles were by no means over.

Now, the fox, becoming exhausted, sought sanctuary in a furze-bush, and it was at this identical spot that Xerxes, who had been careering along well in advance of the body of the pack, chose to suddenly stop. 'Off flew Benjamin beside the fox,' who, all wild with fear and rage, seized Ben by the nose, who ran about with the fox hanging to him, yelling, "Murder! Murder! Murder!" for hard life.'

On another occasion, exasperated by Ben's incompetence, Jorrocks declared: "That beggar Binjimin's of no more use than a hopera-box would be to a cow, or a frilled shirt to a pig."

But to hear him talk to a collection of hangers-on in the saddle-room, a stranger might have been deluded into supposing Benjamin to be the quintessence of what a whipper-in should be. For, ignorant and useless though he was, he arrogantly boasted of his hard-riding and of his exploits in the hunting field, making out that his valuable services were indispensable to Mr. Jorrocks, while at the same time disloyally speaking of his master in terms of disparagement.

"It's precious little consequence, I thinks, ven we goes out again," said he to his usual saddle-room audience on the day following his unfortunate experiences, already described, "if that gallows old governor of ours persists in 'unting the 'ounds himself. I've *all* the work to do! Bless ye, we should have lost 'ounds, fox, and all, yesterday, if I hadn't rid like the werry wengeance. See 'ow I've scratched my mug. If I'm to 'unt the 'ounds, and risk my neck at every stride, I must have the wages of a 'untsman.'"

Then referring to his master: "Whiles, he's well enough—then it's Bin this, and Bin that, and Bin you'll be a werry great man, and such like gammon; and then the next minute, p'r'aps, he's in a reg'lar sky-blue, swearin' he'll cut my liver and lights out, or bind me apprentice to a fiddler—but then I knows the old fool, and he knows he carn't do without me, so we just battle on the best way we can together."

The impudent young rascal then went on to accuse Mr. Jorrocks of boastfulness, precisely similar to his own flamboyant tarradiddles. "He's a precious old file, too," resumed the little urchin, elated at the popularity he was acquiring, "to hear him talk, I'm blowed if you wouldn't think he'd ride over an 'ouse.'"

Whereupon, the utterly shameless Ben proceeded to entertain his hearers with a novel account of the previous day's activities.

"If I hadn't been as lively as a lark, and lept like a louse, we should never have seen an 'ound no more. Well, I rides, and rides, for miles and miles, as 'ard as ever the 'oss could lay legs to the ground, over everything, 'edges, ditches, gates, styles, rivers, determined to stick by 'em—see wot a mug I've got with rammin'

through the briars—and I wouldn't part company with 'em, and the consequence was, we killed the fox—my eyes, such a wopper!—big as a bull—fierce as fury—flew at my snout—nearly bit it off—kept a hold of him though—and worried his soul out.”

What, we wonder, would Ben's saddle-room audience have thought had they seen a subsequent entry in Mr. Jorrocks's journal anent this conglomeration of talent, this cool negotiator of 'edges, ditches, gates and rivers: “Pigg flew a double flight of oak rails, and Bin began to cry as soon as ever he saw them.”

On being asked about his wages, the incorrigible young rogue admitted that his only 'parquisites,' as he called them, were derived from mixing chopped onions with the horses' corn—thus saving an occasional feed for disposal to a local poultry farmer—and picking off postage stamps! Benjamin explained that the onion trick was necessitated by his master's invariable practice of being present to see that his horses were given their proper allowance of corn.

But the reader may like to have the little cockney's own brazen description of this abominable practice:

“Vy, the chopped inion rig be just this,” said he to his astonished listeners. “You must advance a small brown out of your own pocket to buy an inion, and chop it werry small. Then you take the sieve, and after shakin' the corn, and hiss'n' at it well, just take half a handful of chopped inion out of your jacket pocket, as you pass up to the 'oss's 'ead, and scatter it over the who'ats, then give the sieve a shake, and turn the whole into the manger. The governor seeing it there, will leave, quite satisfied that the 'oss has had his dues, and perhaps may get you out of the stable for half an hour or so, but that makes no odds, when you goes back you'll find it all there, and poulterers like it none the worse for the smell of the inions.”

The circumstances in which Ben first came to Mr. Jorrocks's notice indicated the lad's disreputable antecedence.

Visiting a charity school for the purpose of finding a suitable boy-of-all-work, Mr. Jorrocks was passing between two ranks of boys drawn up facing each other for his inspection, when an infamous young reprobate spat in his hand which he held behind his back.

The culprit was, of course, Master Benjamin Brady, and here is his own bare-faced version of what followed:

“Hooi! Mr. Martin (the schoolmaster),” roared he (Jorrocks), jumpin' round, “here's a bouzy spit in my 'and! the biggest gog wotever was seen!” showing his mauley to Martin with it all runnin' off; and Martin, seeing who was behind, werry soon fixed upon me—“You little dirty, disreputable 'bomination,” said he, seizing of me by the collar, “vot the deuce do you mean by insultin' a gen'leman that will be Lord Mayor? I'll flog you within half a barley-corn of your life!”

“Haw! haw! haw!” roared Jorrocks, taking out a red cotton wipe and rubbing his 'and dry, “haw! haw! haw! werry good, Mr. Martin, werry good—promisin' bouzy that, I thinks, promisin' bouzy that, likes them with mischief, poopeys and bouys—never good for nothin' unless they ave.”

And that, strange as it may seem, was how Benjamin came to be employed

by the generous old tea-merchant, future Master of Hounds, Justice of the Peace and Member of Parliament.

Now, when Squire Jorrocks, of Hillingdon Hall, paid a visit to Donkeyton Castle, it is recorded that Benjamin accompanied him. This excursion provided the sharp-witted little cockney with an opportunity of exercising his innate cunning to advantage.

Claiming to be an upper servant by posing as Mr. Jorrocks's valet, Ben succeeded in gaining admission to the select band of 'gentlemen's gentlemen,' gathered at the castle, with the result that, during the evening's relaxation in the servants' hall, he was able to sting them at cards to the tune of two pounds, nine shillings and sixpence. Not one of his opponents would, needless to say, have the ghost of a chance against so unscrupulous a young blackguard, cradled, as he doubtless had been, in an atmosphere of dishonesty and an environment where it was a case of everyone for himself and the devil take the hindmost.

There he had, assuredly, learnt much of the artfulness needed for survival in the battle of wits, and thus was he well-equipped for swindling his fellow-servants.

So as to add colour to the pretence of being Mr. Jorrocks's valet, Benjamin, at the conclusion of the evening's festivities, repaired to his master's room, ostensibly to assist him in undressing. It was, at once, clear that Mr. Jorrocks had done himself uncommonly well, for he was lying fully dressed on a sofa, and fast asleep, when the boy's entry awoke him.

"Vell (hiccup), Binjimin," said Mr. Jorrocks, opening one eye and cocking up a leg, "vot are you arter now? (hiccup). Marmeylad, I daresay."

"Please, sir, did you ring?" inquired Benjamin.

"Vy, no (hiccup), Binjimin—I didn't—(hiccup) ring—at least not that I minds (hiccup)—but here, turn (hiccup) about, and let's have my (hiccup) tops off; for this 'ere one's a pinchin' o' my (hiccup) corn";—Mr. Jorrocks raising a leg for a lever, and lifting the other to put between Benjamin's legs, to make what sportsmen call a new-fashioned boot-jack of the boy.

"Please, sir, you harnt got your tops on," replied Benjamin.

"Ah (hiccup), vell, never mind (hiccup)," replied Mr. Jorrocks, starting up. "They're my pamps, are they? I thought I'd been out an 'unting. Vell, left me up, I s'pose (hiccup) it's about (hiccup) bed-time (hiccup)."

"Nigh *von*!" replied Benjamin. "They keep rum hours at these great shops. Never goes to bed afore midnight."

"Queer coves," hiccuped Mr. Jorrocks.

"'Deed are they!" replied Benjamin, "but I've put the leak into some o' them great long lazy London Johnnies. Won a 'atful o' money of them!"

"'Atful o' money 'ave you (hiccup), Binjimin?" hiccuped Mr. Jorrocks, "that was (hiccup) werry clever (hiccup) o' you—you'll be a (hiccup) great man, Binjimin (hiccup)."

"Yes, sir," said Benjamin.

"A werry (hiccup) great man," hiccuped Mr. Jorrocks; "(hiccup) sobriety and

(hiccup) cleanliness are (hiccup) great things in the world. Never (hiccup) degrade yourself, Binjamin, to the (hiccup) level of a (hiccup) beast by intemperance (hiccup). Drunkenness is a shockin' (hiccup) sin. Drink (hiccup) will do nothin' (hiccup) for no man."'

' "Yes, sir," replied Benjamin, looking at his master.'

' "Where (hiccup) moderation dwells (hiccup), the mind (hiccup) expands with mutual (hiccup) ardour (hiccup), and all that sort o' thing (hiccup)!"'

' "Yes, sir," said Benjamin.'

On becoming a Justice of the Peace and, on that account, raising Benjamin to the eminence of his clerk, Mr. Jorrocks insisted on providing him with a wig, gown and a pair of green-tinted spectacles, to add, as he said, to the dignity of his office.

So one day, when his master was engaged with a visitor, and Joshua Sneakington, the village constable, brought in what Mr. Jorrocks called a waggabone (vagabond), the impudent Benjamin, with the connivance of Joshua, resolved to impersonate his employer and deal with the case himself. Said he to Joshua: "'If you'll fetch the waggabone forrad, I'll sarve him out 'andsomely, and we can divide the fine for our trouble.'"

' "Well, I've no objection," replied Joshua.'

Whereupon, attired in his official costume and seated at the kitchen table, with a few cookery books arranged imposingly in front of him, Benjamin, in a tone of authority, thus addressed Joshua, as he ushered in the handcuffed prisoner:

' "Who have you got there?"'

' "A prisoner, please your worship," replied Joshua, with a low bow.'

' "Fatch him forrad, fatch him forrad," rejoined Benjamin, imitating his master's voice and dialect.'

' "Who prefars the charge?" inquired Benjamin.'

' "Me, please your worship," replied Joshua.'

' "Then take this 'ere book in your right 'and," said Benjamin, handing Joshua *Mrs. Glass's Cookery Book*: "take off your glove, and I'll swear you."'

Finally, after hearing Joshua's story and the prisoner's flat denial of the accusation, our self-appointed magistrate thus delivered his verdict:

' "I makes no doubt you're a great waggabone, werry great waggabone. I convicts you in the penalty of five shillings for being drunk; and for God's sake," added he in an undertone to Joshua, "get the tin and shove him out of sight as quick as ever you can."'

But this precious pair of scoundrels were not so lucky when they turned their hands to poaching.

One morning, being early astir, Squire Jorrocks observed in the distance certain stealthy movements, which appeared to him suspicious. Approaching cautiously by way of a deep ditch, an exclamation: "'Crikey, but here's a plummy one!" from a shrill voice, told him that he was close upon the delinquents, and starting up by the side of a big tree, Mr. Jorrocks came upon Benjamin just as he was wringing the neck of a partridge that Joshua Sneakington had handed him from the net.'

'Benjamin stared like one possessed, for the fumes of drink were still upon him. Joshua Sneakington turned deadly pale.'

' "YOU INFERNAL WILLAINS!" roared Mr. Jorrocks with doubled fists from the top of the hedge, "I'll transport you," a declaration that had the effect of sobering Benjamin, who dropped on his knees, and with clasped hands began clamouring for mercy:

' "*Mercy! mercy! mercy!*" exclaimed he; "it was all this infernal willain wot forced me to it—there weren't a better-disposed bye in all the world afore I got acquainted with this great hugly thief," casting an indignant glance at the trembling Joshua.'

' "You warmint," grinned Mr. Jorrocks, still standing with clenched fists, gasping for rage, and meditating whether to jump atop of Benjamin or not.'

' "Indeed I'm innocent, sir," continued Benjamin, looking imploringly at his master. "There weren't a more wirtuous amiable bye than I was afore I got corrupted by that amazin' great willain. He's enough to ruin a county." '

When Joshua began: ' "Oh, your worship!" ' " "Don't vorship me!" roared Mr. Jorrocks, "you unmitigated scamp. No wonder my partridges are few, and the fizzants don't crow as they used. Get out o' my sight, you double-distilled essence of roguery, or assuredly I'll murther you; I'll ram your 'at down your puritanical throat, and stuff a stockin' arter it." '

On the way home with his master, Benjamin shamelessly "turned King's evidence," put the whole of the blame on Joshua who, he insisted, had led him astray, and, in the hope by so doing of escaping punishment himself, gave Mr. Jorrocks a full account of the village constable's poaching operations in which he declared he had been forced to assist.

In the result, Joshua was given three months to ruminate on his sins in the house of correction, while our cockney urchin, who, though every bit as big a blackguard as his partner in crime, surpassed him in ability to wriggle out of scrapes, once more got off scot-free.

And so we leave this victim of bad upbringing and early evil influences, conscious of our failure to find, in his character, one redeeming feature.

CHAPTER IX

JOGGLEBURY CROWDEY

(References are to *Mr. Sponge's Sporting Tour* and
Mr. Romford's Hounds.)

THE reader has already been introduced to Mr. Jogglebury Crowdey as one of Soapey Sponge's unfortunate victims. But in thus denouncing Sponge as an impostor, it must, in fairness, be remembered that his hosts, as a rule, threw their doors open to him only from motives of self-interest.

Sponge's reputed wealth, for instance, prompted the covetous Jawleyford to regard him as a potential son-in-law. Puffington, swallowing the delusion that he was a sporting journalist, contemplated the publication of flattering eulogies of his establishment. While the hero of our chapter, or, to be more precise, his wife, entertained fond hopes of their supposedly opulent guest assuming the responsibility of godfather to Gustavus James, latest addition to the house of Crowdey.

Apart from his paunch, whose ample proportions spoke volumes for the capabilities of Mrs. Jog as a housekeeper, Mr. Jogglebury Crowdey was a little bit of a chap, all puffed-up with self-importance, due in part, no doubt, to his phenomenal success in adding to the population. So numerous, indeed, were the little Jogs that the casual observer must have been lost in wonder as to how the good lady could have contrived to produce so many in the time available since she took the fruitful Jog for better or for worse.

A sister of the pretty Mrs. Springwheat whom, as the reader will remember, Lord Scamperdale found so attractive, and who was almost equally prolific in propagating the Springwheat species, Mrs. Crowdey might be described as a buxom lady of happy disposition, wrapped up in her family, for whose welfare she unceasingly struggled.

Her husband, a rather pompous, fussy little man who, doubtless on account of his obesity and short neck, appeared to be constantly out of breath, occupied himself, for the most part, in searching the countryside for what he called gibbey-sticks, and fashioning their heads into facsimiles of famous people.

Without the smallest enthusiasm for hunting, he, nevertheless, ventured out from time to time at the behest of Mrs. Jog, who thought that by so doing he might meet people likely to prove useful to their growing family.

On these occasions, Jog's activities might have been more accurately described as gibbey-stick hunting, for he took advantage of the licence enjoyed by fox-hunters, to dive into the thickest covers, not, as at first supposed, from keenness to see hounds work up to their fox, but rather for the purpose of marking down likely-looking



Mr. Jogglebury Crowdey busy with his gibbon sticks

material for future plundering, and ultimate conversion into his beloved gibbey-sticks.

The Crowdey demesne, Puddingpote Bower, a comfortable, though not extensive dwelling, was cluttered from top to bottom with these precious specimens of Mr. Jogglebury's craft. He had, indeed, accumulated literally hundreds of them, and so high an opinion did he hold of his skill, that he valued the collection at an immense figure.

Mrs. Jog, on the other hand, being unable to share his optimism, preferred to ensure the future security of the family by finding wealthy godparents for the children.

Let us listen to the conversation of this comfortably-situated, domesticated, happily-married couple, as they sit over their tea one evening, soon after the reputedly affluent Mr. Sponge had descended upon the neighbourhood.

"Jog, my dear," said Mrs. J. to her spouse, "it would be well to look after him (Mr. Sponge.)"

"What for, my dear?" asked Jog, who was staring a stick, with a half-finished head of Lord Brougham for a handle, out of countenance, and recalling the eye and features that some five-and-twenty years before had nearly withered him in a breach of promise action, "*Smiler v. Jogglebury*," that being our friend's name before his uncle Crowdey left him his property.'

"Why, now, if you were to try and get this rich Mr. Sponge for a god-papa for Gustavus James," continued she, "*that*, I should say, would be worthy of you."

"But, my (puff) dear," replied Jogglebury, "I don't know Mr. (wheeze) Sponge, to begin with."

"That's nothing," replied Mrs. Jogglebury; "he's a stranger, and you should call upon him." Mr. Jogglebury sat silent, still staring at Lord Brougham, thinking how he pitched into him, and how sick he was when the jury, without retiring from the box, gave five hundred pounds damages against him.'

"He's a fox-hunter, too," continued his wife, "and you ought to be civil to him."

"Well, but, my (puff) dear, he's as likely to (wheeze) these fifty years as any (puff—wheeze) man I ever looked at," replied Jogglebury.'

"Oh, nonsense," replied Mrs. Jogglebury; "there's no saying when a fox-hunter may break his neck. I tell you, Jog, you should call on this gentleman, and ask him to come and stay here."

"Perhaps he mightn't like it (puff)," replied Jogglebury. "I don't know that we could (puff) entertain him as he's (wheeze) accustomed to be."

"Oh, nonsense," replied Mrs. Jogglebury; "we can entertain him well enough. I tell you, Jog, you're far too humble, you don't think half enough of yourself."

"Well, but, my (puff) dear, you don't (puff) consider that all people ain't (puff) fond of (wheeze) children," observed Jogglebury.'

"Oh, but those will be nasty little brats, like Mrs. James Wakenshaw's, or Mrs. Tom Cheek's. But such children as ours! such charmers! such delights! there isn't a man in the county, from the Lord-Lieutenant downwards, who wouldn't

be proud to be asked to be god-papa to such children. I tell you what, Mr. Jogglebury Crowdey, it would be far better to get them rich god-papas and god-mammas than to leave them a whole house full of sticks.”

“Well, but, my (puff) dear, the (wheeze) sticks will prove very (wheeze) hereafter,” replied Jogglebury, bridling up at the imputation on his hobby.

“I *hope* so,” replied Mrs. Jogglebury, in a tone of incredulity.

“Well, but, my (puff) dear, I (wheeze) you that they will be—indeed (puff), I may (wheeze) say that they (puff) are. It was only the other (puff) day that (wheeze) Patrick O’Fogo offered me five-and-twenty (wheeze) shillings for my (puff) black-thorn Daniel O’Connell, which is by no means so (puff) good as the (wheeze) wild-cherry one, or, indeed (puff), as the yew-tree one that I (wheeze) out of Spankerley Park.”

“I’d have taken it if I’d been you,” observed Mrs. Jogglebury.

“But he’s (puff) worth far more,” retorted Jogglebury, angrily; “why (wheeze) Lumpleg offered me as much for Disraeli.”

“Well, I’d have taken it, too,” rejoined Mrs. Jogglebury.

“But I should have (wheeze) spoilt my (puff) set,” replied the gibbey-stick man. “S’pose any (wheeze) body was to (puff) offer me five guineas a (puff) piece for the (puff) pick of my (puff) collection—my (puff) Wellingtons, my (wheeze) Napoleons, my (puff) Byrons, my (wheeze) Walter Scotts, my (puff) Lord Johns, d’ye think I’d take it?”

“I should hope so,” replied Mrs. Jogglebury.

“I should (puff) do no such thing,” snorted her husband into his frill. “I should hope,” continued he, “that a (puff) wise ministry will purchase the whole (puff) collection for a (wheeze) grateful nation.”

“Well, but will you go and call on Mr. Sponge, dear?” asked Mrs. Jogglebury Crowdey.

“Well, my dear, I’ve no objection,” replied Jog.

“That’s a good soul!” exclaimed Mrs. Jogglebury, soothingly. “Go to-morrow, like a nice, sensible man, and ask him to come here.”

Now, although Jog felt strong disinclination to undertake the suggested mission, so much, if the truth be known, was he in awe of his wife that, when all his arguments against the project had been nullified by Mrs. Jog, he dared not refuse.

It was to Hanby House that he reluctantly journeyed next day, for there our friend Sponge was staying as the guest of Mr. Puffington who, incidentally, as recounted elsewhere, had been feigning illness with a view to getting rid of his tenacious visitor, whose calling he had so rashly taken for granted. Jog’s embassy, therefore, played right into Sponge’s hands, and provided him with an open door just as that of Hanby House was about to close upon him.

But the poor plump little gibbey-stick-maker had not reckoned with so instantaneous an acceptance of his invitation, or with such overwhelming assurance as Soapey evinced. Swept completely off his feet, he found himself but clay in the hands of so practised a campaigner as Mr. Sponge, who was determined to take no chances of this heaven-sent opportunity eluding him.

With considerable hesitancy and diffidence, Mr. Crowdey thus delivered himself of the invitation proposed by his wife:

““I was going to say (hem—cough—hem); that’s to say, I was thinking (hem—wheeze—cough—hem), or rather I should say, Mrs. Jogglebury Crowdey sent me to say—I mean to say,” continued he, stamping one of his ponderous feet against the floor as if to force out his words. “Mrs. Jogglebury Crowdey and I would be glad—happy, that’s to say (hem)—if you would arrange (hem) to (wheeze) pay us a visit (hem.)””

““Well, you’re a *devilish* good fellow!” exclaimed Sponge, “and I’ll tell you what, as I’m sure you mean what you say, I’ll take you at your word and go at once.””

““Oh, but (puff—wheeze—gasp),” started Mr. Jogglebury, the blood rushing to his great yellow, whiskerless cheeks, “I’m not quite (gasp) sure that Mrs. (gasp) Jogglebury (puff) Crowdey would be (puff—wheeze—gasp) prepared.””

““Oh, *hang* preparation!” interrupted Mr. Sponge. “I’ll take you as you are. Never mind me. I hate being made company of. Just treat me like one of yourselves; toad-in-the-hole, dog-in-the-blanket, beef-steaks and oyster-sauce, rabbits and onions—anything; nothing comes amiss to me. I daresay you could manage to put me up a couple of horses, couldn’t you? and then we should be all cosy and jolly together, you know.””

““’Pon my word,” gasped Jogglebury, nearly choked by the proposal; “’pon my word, I can hardly (puff) say, I hardly (wheeze) know, but if you’ll (puff—wheeze) allow me, I’ll tell you what I’ll do; I’ll (puff—wheeze) home, and see what I can (puff) do in the way of entertainment for (puff—wheeze) man as well as for (puff—wheeze) horse.””

““Oh, *thank you*, my dear fellow!” exclaimed Sponge, seeing the intended dodge; “*thank you*, my dear fellow!” repeated he; “but that’s giving you too much trouble—*far* too much trouble! couldn’t think of such a thing—no, indeed, I couldn’t. *I’ll* tell you what we’ll do. You shall drive me over in that shandry-dan-rattle-trap thing of yours”—Sponge looking out of the window, as he spoke, at the queer-shaped, jumped-together, lack-lustre-looking vehicle—“and I’ll just see what there is in the way of stabling.””

““I really think,” gasped Mr. Jogglebury Crowdey, “that my (puff—wheeze) plan is the (puff) best; let me (puff—wheeze) home and see how all (puff—wheeze) things are, and then I’ll write you a (puff—wheeze) line, or send a (puff—wheeze) servant over.””

““Oh, no,” replied Mr. Sponge—“oh, no—that’s far too much trouble. I’ll just go over with you now and reconnoitre.””

““I’m afraid Mrs. (puff—wheeze) Crowdey will hardly be prepared for (puff—wheeze) visitors,” ejaculated our friend, recollecting it was washing-day, and that Mary Ann would be wanted in the laundry.””

““Don’t mention it!” exclaimed Mr. Sponge. “I hate to be made company of. Just give me what you have yourselves. Where two can dine, three can dine, you know.””

And so poor Jog, like many others before him, succumbed to the wiles of the overpowering, relentless imposter, and was obliged to wait while Sponge packed his things, and then transport him bag and baggage to his home. All the way he was on tenterhooks, wondering how Mrs. Jog would take it, wondering how many haddocks there were for dinner, and bemoaning the fact that it was washing-day at Puddingpote Bower.

Before reaching their destination, however, his drooping spirits had, to some extent, revived as a result of collecting, en route, material for several gibbey-sticks that his searching eye had spotted on the way over. Especially pleased was he at having secured a beauty that seemed worthy of inclusion in his series of England's crowned heads. At the same time he expressed surprise that Mr. Sponge had not heard of his 'great national undertaking'!

On at least one occasion, Mr. Jogglebury Crowdey had been called upon to answer, in a court of law, for this barefaced vandalism, and his notoriety as a trespasser had become widespread. For instance, when Sponge told Farmer Peastraw he was staying with Jog:

"He is a deuce of a man, that, for breakin' people's hedges," observed Mr. Peastraw; "he can't see a straight stick of no sort, but he's sure to be at it. Have the goodness to tell Mr. Crowdey from me, that the next time he comes here a bush-rangin', I'll thank him to shut the gates after him. He set all my young stock wrong the last time he was here." "

After being what he called "county-courted," Jog was rather more careful to cover his tracks, bidding Bartholomew, his lad-of-all-work, bury the leaves and things as he lopped them off with his little pocket-axe.

Mr. Sponge's reception by his would-be god-child, at breakfast on the first morning of his visit, was anything but conducive towards the ultimate success of Mrs. Crowdey's plans, for as Soapey entered the dining-room, Gustavus James, heir—so his devoted mother already began to believe—to the Sponge "fortune," blurted out:

"Who's that ogl-e-y man, ma?" "

"Hush! my dear," exclaimed Mrs. Crowdey, hoping Mr. Sponge hadn't heard.'

"Send that ogl-e-y man away, ma!" whined he in a louder tone, at which all the children burst out laughing.'

"Baby (puff), Gustavus! (wheeze)," exclaimed Jog, frowning at the prodigy.'

"Well, pa, he *is* a ogl-e-y man," replied the child, amid the ill-suppressed laughter of the rest.'

The next phase of the unequal battle of wits between Mr. Jogglebury Crowdey and his uncompromising guest, opened after breakfast when Sponge insisted on inspecting the stabling.

Said he to his host, on seeing the ample accommodation:

"I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll have my horses over here, and you shall find them in straw in return for the manure, and just charge me for hay and corn at market price, you know. That'll make it all square and fair, and no obligation, you know. I hate obligations," added he, eyeing Jog's disconcerted face.'

““Oh, but (puff—wheeze—gasp)—” exclaimed Jogglebury, reddening up —“I don’t (puff) know that I can (gasp) that. Besides, I don’t (puff—wheeze) know about the market price of (gasp) corn. My (wheeze) tenant, Tom Hayrick, at the (puff) farm on the (wheeze) hill yonder, supplies me with the (puff) quantity I (wheeze) want, and we just (puff—wheeze—gasp) settle once a (puff) half-year, or so.””

““Ah, I see,” replied Mr. Sponge; “you mean to say you wouldn’t know how to strike the average so as to say what I ought to pay.””

““Just so,” rejoined Mr. Jogglebury, jumping at the idea.’

““Ah, well,” said Mr. Sponge, in a tone of indifference, “it’s no great odds,—more the name of the thing than anything else; one likes to be independent, you know, but as I shan’t be with you long, I’ll just put up with it for once, and let you find me.” So saying, he walked away, leaving Jogglebury petrified at his impudence.’

That evening it was arranged that next day Jog should drive his guest in the old “shandry-dan-rattle-trap” to the appointed meeting-place of Sir Harry Scatter-cash’s hounds, Leather (Sponge’s job groom) being sent on with the horses.

But the day being punctuated by a succession of delays, exasperating to so keen a fox-hunter as our friend Soapey, though of little moment to Jog, they succeeded in getting nothing more than a bird’s-eye view of hounds, running like smoke in the far distance, and getting further and further away from them as they went.

The first check to the day’s proceedings came after breakfast, as Mr. Sponge appeared at the foot of the stairs, booted, spurred and ready for the fray. There, unfortunately, he was brought to a halt, by Mrs. Jog, Gustavus James at foot.

““Oh, Mr. Sponge,”” said she, ““here’s Gustavus James wants to tell you a little story.””

So with his host waiting for him in the trap outside, and he himself bursting to be off, the luckless Soapey was obliged to listen while the hope of the house of Crowdey, to the accompaniment of much coaxing and prompting by mamma, recited his famous—infamous Sponge thought it—‘Obin and Ichard.’

““Obin and Ichard, two pretty men,
Lay in bed till ’e clock struck ten;
Up starts Obin, and looks at the sky——””

A long pause ensued during which Sponge tried hard to break away, only to be frustrated in his design by Mrs. J.’s irresistible appeals.

Altogether, what with the child’s obstinacy, and mamma’s determination to impress the prospective godfather with the marvel’s cleverness, the loss of time occasioned to Sponge and his host became so extensive, that when, at last, they got going, there was little prospect of a punctual arrival at the meet.

Then, as they rattled along, Sponge unwisely gave Jog a cigar, further delay resulting.

““*I am going to be (puff) sick,*” observed he (Jog), slowly and solemnly.’

“Hope not,” replied Mr. Sponge, with a hearty whiff up into the air.’

“I *am* going to be (puff) sick,” observed Jog, after another pause.’

“Be sick on your own side, then,” replied Sponge, with another hearty whiff.’

“By the (puff) powers! I *am* (puff) sick!” exclaimed Jogglebury, throwing away the cigar. “Oh, dear!” exclaimed he, “you shouldn’t have given me that nasty (puff) thing.”’

“My dear fellow, I didn’t know it would make you sick,” replied Mr. Sponge.’

“Well, but (puff) if they (wheeze) other people sick, in all (puff) probability they’ll (wheeze) me. *There!*” exclaimed he, pulling up again.’

Finally, with only ten minutes left and three miles yet to go, Soapey’s exasperation reached its summit on Jog pulling up alongside a wood and preparing to get down:

“Just lay hold for a minute whilst I (puff) out,” said he, giving Sponge the reins.

“What’s happened?” asked Sponge. “Not sick again, are you?”’

“No (puff), not exactly (wheeze) sick, but I want to be out all the (puff) same.”’

Needless to say he was after his eternal gibbey-sticks again, as the sound of his little pocket-axe, echoing from the depths of the forest, soon proclaimed.

“By the powers, the fool’s at his sticks!” exclaimed Sponge. “Mr. Jogglebury!” roared he, “Mr. Jogglebury, we shall never catch up the hounds at this rate!”’

But Jog, caring not a jot for hunting, or, indeed, for anything but his absorbing hobby, went on chopping until any hope that yet remained of coming up with the hounds had long since vanished.

At this point, the reader might, perhaps, be interested in a brief description of Mr. Jogglebury Crowdey’s appearance when equipped for hunting. Well then, his ample stomach, already alluded to, was, not without difficulty, squeezed into a tightly-fitting black coat, every button of which almost groaned under the strain imposed upon it. A full skirt provided capacious pockets, in which were stowed buns, toast, slices of ham, *and*, most important of all, the axe.

His short, plump legs were clothed in white moleskins, much the worse for wear, not from the perils of the chase, but from tearing his way through thickets and dense undergrowth, in his desperate, fanatical quest of gibbey-sticks. His ill-fitting top-boots, Surtees tells us, ‘dangled at his horse’s sides like a couple of stable-buckets,’ while at his throat he invariably wore an enormous frill which, protruding in front of his chin, was constantly being blown about in the gusts, produced by his short-winded puffing, wheezing and gasping.

It was not long before our fat friend began bitterly to repent him of his rashness in agreeing to the Sponge visit, for what with a growing conviction that his guest was by no means the great man he pretended to be, coupled with a disturbing twinge of jealousy caused by Mrs. Jog’s attentions to Gustavus James’s prospective god-parent, he felt thoroughly out of sorts and became intent only on getting rid of Mr. Sponge at the earliest possible moment. His optimistic wife, however, continued to entertain a belief in her visitor’s wealth, and to visualize Gustavus James as a future Croesus.

Now, Mr. Jogglebury Crowdey was not given to throwing his money away; indeed even toll-gate fees he hated being called upon to pay—a reluctance that was revealed during his stick-hunting drive with Mr. Sponge.

Pulling up, as the toll-gate of Bilkington appeared in sight, he exclaimed to his guest:

‘“It’s no use going any (wheeze) further.”’

‘“Just a *leetle* further!” exclaimed Mr. Sponge, soothingly. “If you would just drive up to that farm-house on the hill,” pointing to one about half a mile off, “I think we should be able to decide whether it’s worth going on or not.”’

‘“Well (puff), well (wheeze), well (gasp),” pondered Jogglebury, “if you (puff) think it’s worth (wheeze) while going through the (gasp) gate,” nodding towards it as he spoke.’

‘“Oh, never mind the gate,” replied Sponge, with an ostentatious dive into his breeches pocket, as if he was going to pay it.’

Then, on reaching the gate, he said:

‘“Oh, hang it! I’ve left my purse at home! Never mind, drive on,” said he to his host; exclaiming to the man (Tom Coppers), “it’s Mr. Crowdey’s carriage—Mr. Jogglebury Crowdey’s carriage! Mr. Crowdey, the chairman of the Stir-it-Stiff Poor-Law Union!”’

‘“*Sixpence!*” shouted the man, following the phaeton with outstretched hand.’

‘“Ord, hang it (puff), I could have done that (wheeze),” growled Jogglebury, pulling up.’

Nothing would have induced either of them to part with sixpence if he could possibly help it, but again poor Jog proved to be no sort of match for the utterly shameless Sponge, and, though fuming at the imposition, he was obliged to pay.

This being his attitude towards so paltry a disbursement as sixpence, Mr. Crowdey’s feelings on finding himself committed, for an indefinite period, to the provision of the necessities of life not only for Mr. Sponge but also for his servant, Leather, and his horses, can well be imagined.

Readers of *Mr. Romford’s Hounds* will remember Jog’s desperate efforts to get out of lending money to Facey, on the sudden death of his Uncle Gilroy; and that Mrs. Jog, as in the case of Sponge, furthered the designs of the impostor, believing Romford to be his uncle’s heir, and hoping to get him as godfather for Marcus Aurelius.

‘“Then you’ll be going up to see about things, won’t you?” asked Mrs. Jogglebury, anxious for Marcus Aurelius’s interest.’

‘“That’s just it,” said Facey, looking out of the corners of his little ferrety eyes at Jogglebury, “that’s just it. You see the bankers won’t let me have any money till the will is proved, and I’ve just come down to see if you can let me have a——”’

‘“Oh (gasp—puff—wheeze) yes, they will,” ejaculated Jog. “When my (wheeze) uncle (gasp) Crowdey died, Blunt and Buggins let me have as much as I (gasped).”’

‘“Ah, that was in the country,” observed Mrs. Jog, thinking to clench the Aurelius interest with a loan.’

“Well, but your (gasp) uncle would have an account in the (wheeze) country as well,” observed Jog.’

“Not he,” replied Facey.’

“Well, but Jog, my dear, I daresay you could let Mr. Romford have what he wants,” said the god-parent-hunter.

“My (puff—gasp) dear, I have only (gasp) pound in the house,” replied the excited Jog, stamping, and turning perfectly scarlet.’

But it was no good. Facey, supported by Jog’s wife, proved far too formidable a combination for the half-frantic, nearly exploding little man to cope with, the result being that impudent assurance gained the day, and friend Romford walked off with a cheque for fifty pounds.

A little later in the day, hearing that, after all, Facey had been left nothing by his uncle, the distracted Jog rushed off in a desperate hurry to stop the cheque at the bank. He had not, however, reckoned with the cunning and wariness of Romford who, in anticipation of this possibility, had lost no time in cashing the cheque at the office of the Poor Law Guardians, whose chairman he was in the act of so shamefully deceiving.

Poor Jog, needless to say, heard no more of his fifty pounds—a terrible blow to a man who suffered agonies if required to pay sixpence at a toll-gate—nor, of course, were the interests of Marcus Aurelius advanced by the transaction.

But, returning to Mr. Sponge’s sojourn with the Jogglebury Crowdeys, the signs with which he had become all too familiar under other roofs, began to make themselves manifest at Puddingpote Bower. He saw the writing on the wall, and realized the time had arrived to look out for fresh fields and pastures new.

Jog’s increasing irritation, and growing distaste for his guest were in no way mitigated by Soapey taking a pot-shot at Ponto, Jogglebury’s fat and erring pointer, who got very properly peppered as a punishment for running off with a bird that Sponge had just brought down.

Furious at this unceremonious treatment of his over-fed, over-petted, worthless hound, which he declared would surely die, Jog bitterly exclaimed that:

“He never saw so (wheeze) a thing done. He wouldn’t have taken twenty pounds for the dog. No, he wouldn’t have taken thirty. Forty wouldn’t have bought him. He was worth fifty of anybody’s money.”

Yet, on their return to the house, friend Ponto was found devouring a substantial meal in the kitchen, and apparently little the worse for his rather painful experience.

But, at long last, Sponge found a fresh victim in Facey Romford, though, to be sure, there was little to choose between them in villainy, and poor Jog finally got rid of his unwelcome guest, exclaiming in disgust, mingled with relief, as he watched Sponge’s receding figure:

“Well, now, that’s the most (puff) impittent feller I ever saw in my life! Catch me (gasp) godpapa-hunting again.”

CHAPTER X

SIR MOSES MAINCHANCE

(References are to *Ask Mamma*.)

A NOTABLE feature of Surtees' writings is the extraordinary ingenuity with which he found names to suit his characters. For example: Soapey Sponge, who lived on hospitality; Robert Foozle, the half-imbecile youth who answered all inquiries in the words of the questioner; Tom Coppers, the toll-gate keeper; Dick Bragg, the boastful, dandified huntsman; Miserrimus Doleful, the lugubrious Master of Ceremonies at Handley Cross; Lucy Glitters, the glamorous, vivacious actress; Sir Harry Scattercash, the drunken spendthrift.

And now we have Sir Moses Mainchance, a name that immediately suggests three golden balls, suspended over a shop window, filled to overflowing with old silver tea-pots, coffee-pots, jugs, trays, dishes, watches, clocks and such-like, entrusted to the care of the proprietor in exchange for the alleviation of temporary financial embarrassment.

The Mainchance family business was, indeed, largely that of money-lending, and by the time the subject of our chapter succeeded to its control, had attained a condition of great prosperity.

This happy state of affairs enabled the ambitious Moses, by means of a substantial donation to party funds—a not uncommon method of securing advancement in the social scale—to acquire a baronetcy.

Sir Moses, whose hat, as Mr. Jorrocks would say, covered his family, was a large, olive-skinned, hook-nosed, rather masterful-looking creature of unmistakably Jewish appearance. An abundance of curly, iron-grey hair receded from a bald forehead, while his massive face was adorned with a small imperial beard and side-whiskers.

On becoming a baronet, he determined to live up to the part, or at any rate try to. So, abandoning business, he acquired a country estate known as Pangburn Park, in the county of Hit-im and Hold-im shire of which he became a Deputy Lieutenant.

He liked to pose as being the soul of generosity, but usually succeeded, with the aid of that ingenuity inherent in his race, in sliding out of his munificent undertakings.

Typical of his methods was the case of Major Yammerton's "gift" horse. The Major, a neighbouring master of harriers, had, one day out hunting, been offered by Sir Moses a horse called Little-bo-peep, and had gratefully accepted the gift, thinking the baronet a capital fellow. But in reality he was anything but a capital fellow, for no sooner had he proclaimed a generous intention than he invariably

repented of his impetuosity, and began to devise means of escaping the consequences; even, on occasions, contriving to arrange matters to his own advantage and profit.

So it was with the luckless Major Yammerton. Having promised to give him the horse and been dubbed a good fellow for his liberality, Sir Moses, in characteristic manner, at once set about absolving himself from the obligation. He, therefore, invited the Major to dine, and after filling him up with strong drink, opened his attack.

“Ah! Major, you’re *quite* welcome to ‘Little-bo-peep,’ and I hope he’ll be useful to you.”

“Thank’e, Sir Moses, thank’e!” bobbed the grateful Major, thinking what a good chap the baronet was.

“*Not a bit!*” replied Sir Moses, just as if he was in the habit of giving a horse away every other day in the week. “*Not a bit!* Keep him as long as you like—all the season if you please—and send him back when you are done.”

Thus, to the vexation of Major Yammerton, was the *gift* unceremoniously transformed into a *loan*.

But that was not the end of the mosaic operations, for soon afterwards the baronet resumed his offensive, exclaiming in a loud voice: “I’ll tell ye what, Yammerton! you’re a devilish good feller, and there shall be no obligation between us—you shall just give me forty puns for ‘Little-bo-peep,’ and that’s making you a present of him, for it’s a hundred less than I gave.”

The gallant Major, being given no opportunity to refuse, thus found himself saddled with a more or less worthless animal, blind of an eye from cataract, and likely to go in the other, for which he was called upon to pay forty pounds.

Soon after settling down at Pangburn Park, Sir Moses accepted the mastership of the Hit-im and Hold-im shire foxhounds, thinking, thereby, to rub shoulders with peers and other notabilities, and to ascend even higher up the social ladder.

Still, he was genuinely interested in hounds and hunting, and what mattered most in the neighbourhood, he proclaimed, in the most grandiloquent manner, that he wouldn’t dream of taking a subscription. ‘He didn’t want a farthing subscription—no, not a farthing! He wouldn’t even have a cover fund—no, not even a cover fund! He’d pay keepers, stoppers, damage, everything himself,—dom’d if he wouldn’t!’

This, naturally, made a very good first impression, as our cunning friend intended it should. But the people of the county did not yet know their Moses, who, however, soon disillusioned them.

First, he demanded five guineas a year subscription to a cover fund, to be increased in the following year to ten guineas.

Still considerably out of pocket, he determined to insist on more generous contributions from the wealthy land-owners of Hit-im and Hold-im shire, and, with this object in view, organized a hunt dinner at the Fox and Hounds Hotel, at Hinton.

A few extracts from the master’s speech on this memorable occasion will convince the reader that, although Sir Moses, on becoming a baronet, a land-owner



Sir Moses Mainchance, M.F.H., presiding at a dinner given to the élite of his field

and a master of hounds, had turned his back on the money-lending, pawnbroking business of his ancestors, whose original name by the way was Levy, he had in no way abandoned the hereditary avarice they bequeathed to him, nor had he forgotten their thrifty teachings.

“Well, then, gentlemen, what I was going to say was this: It occurred to me this morning as I was shaving myself, that for a very little additional outlay—say four hundred a year—and what’s four hundred a year among so many of us? we might have four days a week, which is a great deal better than three in many respects, inasmuch as you have two distinct lots of hounds, accustomed to hunt together, instead of a jumble for one day, and both men and horses are in steadier and more regular work; and as to foxes, I needn’t say we have plenty of them, and that they will be all the better for a little more exercise—(Applause from Sir Moses’ men). Well, then, say four hundred a year, or, as hay and corn are dear and likely to continue so, suppose we put it at the worst, and call it five—five hundred—what’s five hundred a year to a great prosperous agricultural and commercial country like this? Nothing! A positive bagatelle! I’d be ashamed to have it known at the ‘Corner’ that we had ever haggled about such a sum.”

“You pay it, then,” muttered Mr. Straddler, who never subscribed.

“Catch him doing that,” growled Mr. Hicks, who didn’t either.

“Well, now, gentlemen,” continued Sir Moses, “I’ve just dotted down the names of those who I think ought to be called upon to contribute. I’ve put young Lord Polkaton down for fifty.”

“But my Lord doesn’t hunt, Sir Moses!” ejaculated Mr. Mossman, his lordship’s land-agent, alarmed at the demand upon a very delicate purse.

“Doesn’t hunt!” retorted Sir Moses angrily. “No; but he might if he liked! If there were no hounds, how the deuce could he? It would do him far more good than dancing at casinos and running after ballet girls, as he does.”

“Well, then,” said the baronet, “comes old Lord Harpsichord. He’s good for fifty, too, I should say. At all events, I’ve put him down for that sum”; adding, “I’ve no notion of those great landed cormorants cutting away to the continent and shirking the obligations of country life. I hold it to be the duty of every man to subscribe to a pack of fox-hounds.”

And so he went on, suggesting as a principle that each of his listeners should endeavour to screw as much as possible out of his nearest neighbour. A very different attitude to that of the generous newcomer on accepting the country, that he wouldn’t take a farthing subscription, and would pay for everything himself—‘dom’d if he wouldn’t.’

The “gift” horse trick, as practised on Major Yammerton, was a favourite one with Sir Moses. He repeated it successfully on young Billy Pringle, the product of a wealthy tradesman and a pretty lady’s-maid, his wife.

Billy was a dandified, foppish young man who at a comparatively early age had inherited his shop-keeping father’s immense fortune. More given to dancing than hunting, he very reluctantly partook of the sport at the bidding of his mother, who looked upon fox-hunting as a sure means of scraping acquaintance with the

higher classes and thus realizing her ambitions for Billy's rise in the social scale. But had it not been for the undeniable attractions of a scarlet coat, it is doubtful if even his mother's persuasive powers would have been equal to the task of inducing him to face the perils of the chase. For "Fine Billy," as he was called, devoted much of his time to dressing up, and thought a red coat would prove quite irresistible to the fair sex.

After beginning with Lord Ladythorne's foxhounds, young Pringle, disliking each day's hunting rather more cordially than its predecessor, continued with Major Yammerton's harriers, and finally fetched up at Pangburn Park as the guest of Sir Moses Mainchance.

Not from the goodness of his heart did the baronet extend his hospitality to our young friend, for no sooner did he hear of Billy's arrival in the neighbourhood and of his immense wealth, than he began to consider how he could be turned to profitable account; and it was, solely, for the purposes of possible gain that he invited him to stay.

Now, as they sat at breakfast one morning before going out hunting, their attention was drawn to a showy-looking grey horse being led past the window. This was an animal known as The Lord Mayor, which Sir Moses, on the previous evening, had offered as a gift to Billy, and which was now being paraded for his inspection, our master having little doubt that the grey's looks would be likely to attract a young ignoramus like Pringle, and to delude him into the belief that only a good horse could present so pleasing an appearance. In reality, The Lord Mayor was utterly worthless either as a hack or a hunter, besides being afflicted by a distressing affection of the brain known as megrims.

"Ah, there's your horse!" exclaimed Sir Moses, pausing in his meal, with the uplifted knife and fork of admiration. "Well now, that, to my mind, is the handsomest horse in the country. Just look at his figure, just look at his action. Did you ever see anything so elegant? To my mind he's as near perfection as possible, and what's more, he's as good as he looks, and all I've got to say is, that you are most heartily welcome to him."

"Oh, thank'e," replied Billy, "thank'e, but I couldn't think of accepting him."

"Oh, but you shall," said Sir Moses, resuming his eating, "Oh, but you shall, so there's an end of the matter."

Whereupon off went the baronet to his study, leaving Billy to finish his breakfast, ruminating the while on the generosity of his host and envisaging himself cutting a dash in Hyde Park on the spectacular grey.

Suddenly Sir Moses burst into the room, flourishing a piece of paper, and, with an air as though he were doing his guest a great favour, exclaimed:

"I'll tell ye what, my dear Pringle! I'll tell ye what! there shall be no obligation, and you shall give me fifty puns for the grey and pay for him when you please. But *mark me!*" added he, "*only on one condition, mind! only on one condition, mind!* that you give me the refusal of him if ever you want to part with him"; and without waiting for an answer, he placed the paper before our friend and,

handing him the pen, said: "There, then, sign that I.O.U." And Billy having signed it, Sir Moses snatched it up and disappeared, leaving him to a renewal of his cogitations.'

But although our worthy baronet upheld the traditional frugality of his race, the benefits that accrued from his niggardly habits and crafty devices were largely discounted by his highly injudicious selection of the staff at Pangburn Park.

His butler, Mr. Bankhead, was a convict on ticket-of-leave; his cook-house-keeper, Mrs. Margerum, a confirmed thief, whose young son, Anthony Thom, undertook the "outdoor department"; his footman a dipsomaniac; and his huntsman, Tom Findlater, an acknowledged authority on hunting, but seldom sober.

"The critter," as a Scotch huntsman told Sir Moses at Tattersall's, "could no keep itsel sober."

The activities of Mrs. Margerum, besides her candid opinion of her employer, were revealed to Sir Moses in a letter he intercepted between mother and son.

"No one knows," ran the cook-housekeeper's letter, "the anxiety and misery of living with such a nasty, mean, covetous body as Old Nosey."

"Old Nosey!" ejaculated Sir Moses, stopping short in his reading, and feeling his proboscis; "Old Nosey! dom it, can that mean me? Do believe it does. What does she mean by calling me a nasty, covetous body? I that hunt the country, subscribe to the Infirmary, Agricultural Society, and do everything that's liberal and handsome. I'll Old Nosey her!" continued he, grinding his teeth, and giving a vigorous flourish of his right fist; "I'll Old Nosey her! I'll turn her out of the house, dom'd if I won't," said Sir Moses, quivering with rage as he spoke.'

Continuing his reading of the letter:

"—who is always on the fret about expense, and thinks everybody is robbing him."

"Oh, dom it, that means me sure enough!" exclaimed Sir Moses; "that's on account of the row I was kicking up t'other day about the tea—declared I drank a pound a week myself. I'll tea her!" continued he, again turning to the letter and reading:

"I declare I'd amost as soon live under a mistress as under such a shocking mean, covetous man. The old feller will be away on Saturday and Sunday, so come on Monday morning, say about four o'clock, and I'll have everything ready to lower from my window, for it's not safe trusting things by the door as we used to do, now that these nasty, knavish Pollis fellers are about; so now, my own beloved Anthony Thom, if you will give a gentle whistle, or throw a little bit of soft dirt up at the window, where you will see a light burning, I'll be ready for you, and you'll be clear of the place long afore any of the lazy fellers here are up,—for a set of nastier, dirtier drunkards never were gathered together."

"B-o-o-y Jove!" exclaimed Sir Moses, sousing himself down in an easy chair (after reading to the end of the letter), "b-o-o-y Jove, what a production. Regular robber, dom'd if she's not."

This, not unnaturally, came as a shock to the parsimonious baronet who quickly set about planning vengeance on the Margerum family, the result being that the

boy was caught red-handed after receiving from his mother a large quantity of household necessities.

Moreover, subsequent inquiries into the conduct of Mrs. Margerum led to the discovery of Mr. Bankhead's lurid past, so that altogether poor Sir Moses was in a sad state of distress at successive disillusionments, and the complete disorganization of his establishment due to well-merited dismissals.

Cogitating on the problems that beset him, as he stood watching the scene of splendour presented by a packed multitude of gaily-attired dancers at the Hit-im and Hold-im shire hunt ball, he came to the conclusion that he was faced with two alternatives. Either to give up living at Pangburn Park, or take unto himself a wife who would keep his house in order.

His thoughts then turned to Clara Yammerton, eldest of the hare-hunting Major's three attractive daughters, who now came whirling past in the arms of his young friend, Billy Pringle—the 'richest commoner' in England.

"Clara was very pretty," thought Sir Moses—"dom'd if she wasn't—she would look very well at the head of his table—he would have her—dom'd if he wouldn't."

Presently, as the strains of the "Ask Mamma" polka died away, Sir Moses, summoning all his courage, 'claimed her hand for the next quadrille.' Then, riding boldly at the matrimonial fence, which, we fancy, seemed to him far more formidable than anything he had ever encountered out hunting, he was rewarded by clearing it handsomely in his stride.

Moreover, any scruples mamma might have entertained on the score of the age, ancestry or appearance of our prospective bridegroom, were easily outweighed by the paramount importance of Clara becoming "my lady."

In no time the cat was out of the bag, for the future Lady Mainchance's sparkling eyes and slightly heightened colour told their unmistakable tale.

And so our chapter ends on a joyous note, with its hero a proud and happy man—dom'd if he wasn't.

CHAPTER XI

MARMADUKE MULEYGRUBS

(References are to *Handley Cross*.)

MARMADUKE MULEYGRUBS, or Duke as his wife called him, had acquired a large fortune from stay-making, and although an exceedingly common, under-bred little man, so substantial were the profits derived from his business that he lived in great style at his imposing seat, Cockolorum Hall, the walls of which were adorned with portraits, purporting to represent a long line of Muleygrubs ancestors, but in reality the proceeds of Duke's foraging operations among dealers in old pictures.

According to the names painted on the frames, there were portraits of Sir Martin Muleygrubs, Dame Juliana Muleygrubs, Darius Muleygrubs, Erasmus Muleygrubs, Memnon Muleygrubs, Pericles Muleygrubs, Demosthenes Muleygrubs, and John Thomas Muleygrubs.

' "Such a lot of stay-makers," ' as Mr. Jorrocks remarked when viewing the paintings of 'grim-visaged warriors, knights in armour, and ladies of bygone days,' on the occasion of his memorable visit to the Muleygrubs family.

Fortunately, for Duke's peace of mind, this typically outspoken Jorrockian declaration was not made in his hearing, for, being a confirmed snob, he took pains to conceal the rather peculiar source of his wealth, and fondly imagined no one to be aware of it.

It is a curious truism that plump little men with large families are often insufferably pompous, autocratic and full of self-conceit. Marmaduke Muleygrubs was a typical case in point, possessing all three attributes to a marked degree.

Having retired from active participation in the stay business, and acquired the dignity of a country gentleman, he became a Justice of the Peace, and after that there was no holding him. Indeed, from the airs he assumed, one might well have believed his judicial services to the Queen to be quite indispensable. He liked to pose as being a great authority on the law, and, in order to impress his guests with his efficiency and knowledge, cluttered up the tables of Cockolorum Hall with text-books, such as Burn's *Justice* and Archbold's *Magistrate's Pocket-book*.

' "The chap must be a *beak*!" ' said Mr. Jorrocks aloud to himself, as he glanced them over' while awaiting his host in the hall.

This assumption was soon confirmed by Muleygrubs himself who, on greeting his guest, lost no time in bringing the business of his office to Mr. Jorrocks's notice.

' "Beg ten thousand pardons for not being here to receive you," ' said Duke, intending to be very gracious. "Been bored with justice business all the afternoon,

bailing a bull that was unjustly put in the pound. You are not in the Commission of the Peace, perhaps?"

"Not I," replied Mr. Jorrocks carelessly; "never was in any commission, save one, as agent for Twankay's mexed teas, and a precious commission it was—*haw! haw! haw!*—lost three 'underd pund by it, and more. But, however, *n'importe*, as we say in France. Werry glad to come here to partake o' your hospitality,—brought my nightcap with me, in course,—a rule o' mine, that where I dine I sleep, and where I sleep I breakfast. Don't do to churn one's dinner up,—'ow long does't want to feedin' time?"

Poor little Muleygrubs was rather nonplussed by this free and easy familiarity on the part of a guest he had counted on patronizing. But he was, of course, unaware of the fact that Jorrocks knew him to be nothing more than, like himself, a tradesman.

Dinner not being due till half-past six, our host suggested a sandwich and a glass of sherry.

"Never touch lunches," replied Mr. Jorrocks, disdainfully. "Never know'd a chap good for nothin' wot did."

"Well, now then," continued he, "tell me 'bout the foxes—'ave you plenty on 'em?"

"*Plenty!*" replied Muleygrubs, with the utmost confidence, for he had just received a very fine dog one from the well-known Mr. Diddler, of Leadenhall Market, who, by dint of stealing back as fast as he supplied, managed to carry on a very extensive business with a very small stock in trade.

Presently Mr. Jorrocks was startled by the thunderous reverberations of a gong.

"An old-fashioned custom we still preserve," said Mr. Marmaduke casually, observing Mr. Jorrocks's astonishment; "that gong was brought by one of my ancestors from the holy wars." An observation that, doubtless, gave Mr. Jorrocks cause for inward merriment at the association of holy wars and stay-makers!

Towards the end of an interminable dinner, to which old Jorrocks had done full justice, a swarm of little Muleygrubs was let loose into the room, very much in the manner of hounds being put into cover.

Attracted, no doubt, by the jovial old grocer's good-natured face, Victoria Jemima selected him as the object of her special attention.

"And wot do they call you, my little dear?" asked he, handling her as he would a hound; "Gravity,—Notable,—Habigail,—Mischief, p'r'aps?" added he, running over the names of some of his lady hounds.

"No; Victoria,"—"Victoria, what?" asked mamma.

"Victoria Jemima," lisped the child.

"Ah, Wictoria Jemima," repeated Mr. Jorrocks. "Wictoria Jemima—Wictoria arter the Queen, I presume; Jemima arter mamma, I des say."

Soon after the departure of women and children, Mr. Jorrocks was in the midst of a protracted discussion with his neighbour and was describing how in digging a fox they worked as though boring for a spring, when Marmaduke, who had long been awaiting a chance to dilate on his favourite topic, broke in with:



Mr. Marmaduke Muleygrubs, J.P.
"Such a lot of Staymakers"

“That’s *very* strange! Old Tommy Roadnight came to me one morning for a summons against Willy Udal for that very thing. He would have it that Willy had bored the rock to draw the water from his well. Now I as a justice of the peace of our sovereign lady the Queen—perhaps you are not in the Commission of the Peace, are you, Mr. Jorrocks?” inquired Mr. Muleygrubs again.’

“*Not I,*” replied Mr. Jorrocks, carelessly.’

“Well, never mind, perhaps you may get in some day or other,” observed the consoling justice; “but as I was saying, I as a county magistrate, with the immense responsibility of the due administration of the laws, tempered always with mercy, without which legislation is intolerant and jurisprudence futile,—I, I say, did not feel justified in issuing my summons under my hand and seal for the attendance of the said William Udal, at the suit of the said Thomas Roadnight, without some better evidence than the conjecture of the said William, therefore I felt unless the said Thomas Roadnight could prove that the said William Udal really and truly drew off the said water——”

“*Con-found your water!*” interrupted Mr. Jorrocks; “give us the *wine*, and let’s have a toast; wot say you to fox-’unting?”

“With all my heart,” replied Mr. Muleygrubs, looking very indignant. “Upon my word,” resumed he, “the man who administers justice fairly and impartially has no easy time of it, and were it not for the great regard I have for the Lord-Lieutenant and my unbounded loyalty to the Queen, I think I should cease acting altogether.”

“Do,” exclaimed Mr. Jorrocks eagerly, “and take to ’unting instead,—make you an honorary member of my ’unt,—far finer sport than sittin’ in a ’ot shop with your ’at on;

Better to rove in fields for ’ealth unbought
Than fee the Doctor for a nauseous draught.”

Now, although enjoying such undoubted affluence, Duke had in him a pronounced streak of meanness. Consequently, when Mr. Jorrocks suggested another bottle of port, our parsimonious host tried hard to put him off with claret.

“Rayther not, thank ye,” replied Mr. Jorrocks, “not the stuff for me.—By the way now, I should think that some of those old ancient hancestors o’ yours have been fond o’ claret.”

“Why so?” replied Mr. Muleygrubs, pertly.’

“Doesn’t know,” replied Mr. Jorrocks, musingly, “but I never hears your name mentioned without thinking o’ small claret. But come, let’s have another bottle o’ black strap—*it’s good strap*—sound and strong—got wot I calls a good grip o’ the gob.”

“Well,” said Mr. Muleygrubs, getting up and ringing the bell, “if you must, you must, but I should think you have had enough.”

“PORT WINE!” exclaimed he to his figure footman, with the air of a man with a dozen set out.’

“Yes, sir,” said the boy, retiring.’

“Letter from the Secretary of State for the Home Department,” exclaimed he, re-entering and presenting Mr. Muleygrubs with a long official letter on a large silver tray.’

“Confound the Secretary of State for the Home Department!” muttered Mr. Muleygrubs, pretending to break a seal as he hurried out of the room.’

“*That’s a rouse!*” (ruse), exclaimed Mr. Jorrocks, putting his fore-finger to his nose, and winking—“gone to the cellar.”’

Presently Duke reappeared hot on the heels of the port-bearing footman.

“And ’ow’s the Secretary o’ State for the ’Ome Department?” inquired Mr. Jorrocks, with a malicious grin.’

In the course of a rather high-falutin after-dinner speech, punctuated by polite expressions of encouragement on the part of his guests and at least one halt by the speaker in anticipation of applause which, however, was not forthcoming, Mr. Muleygrubs referred to the “arduous and difficult office” of the magistracy who formed “a bulwark round the throne, more national and more noble than the coronetted spawn of a mushroom haristocracy.”’

Finally, after alluding to the obligation of English gentlemen to serve in the Commission of the Peace——

“England expects,” dramatically concluded “Horatio” Muleygrubs, ‘raising his voice and throwing out his right arm, “that every man will do his duty.”’

“Bravo, Grubs!” exclaimed Mr. Jorrocks; you speak like Cicero!” an encomium that drew forth the ill-suppressed mirth of the party.’

Next morning, the squire of Cockolorum Hall, dressed for hunting, presented a most curious appearance as he encountered his guest before breakfast. His feet and lower legs were encased in Wellington boots with buttoned wash-leather tops. Britannia-metal spurs, being on the wrong feet, were buckled inside. Above his white moleskins, a vast protuberance of scarlet waistcoat was stretched over his ample paunch, and secured by an array of nobbly buttons that stuck out like bobbins on a lace-pillow. His red and white striped stock was held in place by a huge pin representing Justice and her scales, the whole rather alarming turn-out being completed by a brown coat with ornate buttons.

In this strange costume he accompanied Mr. Jorrocks on a tour of the grounds.

“All these heaps,” said our host, ‘pointing to sundry heaps of stones among the trees, “have been broken by beggars. Working beggars, and employing the new police about one’s place occasionally are really the only pulls we justices have.”’

“Dress the poliss up as flunkeys, I s’pose,” observed Mr. Jorrocks.’

“Just so,” replied Mr. Muleygrubs, “or work them in the garden. It’s by far the best way of disposing of the force, for you see, in a thinly populated district, where each man has a considerable range, you never know where to lay hands on a policeman; whereas, about here, they know they have only to send to his workshop’s to get one directly.”’

“No doubt it is,” replied Mr. Jorrocks, adding aloud to himself, as the bearings of the case crossed his mind, “and the best thing for the thief too. Wonders now if the beggar would let one make earth-stoppers on them—stop the thief o’ the world.”’

On their return to the house, a Jewish picture-dealer nursing the portrait of 'a grim-visaged warrior, with a lace collar, and his hand resting on a basket-handled sword,' was found to be awaiting an interview with the great man, and very nearly gave the game away.

' "Got a match for your dining-room por——" '

' "I'll speak to you after!" exclaimed Mr. Muleygrubs, hastily pushing the purveyor of ancestors aside, and drawing Mr. Jorrocks onward to the breakfast-room.'

Soon, the hounds appeared before the house and, in a spasm of generosity, Mr. Muleygrubs directed the footman to take out refreshment to James Pigg and Benjamin.

' "Thank ye, no!" exclaimed Mr. Jorrocks; "I'll give them a Seidlitz *pooder* a-piece when they gets 'ome." '

' "Why don't you shoot the fox, Mr. Jonnocks!" now demanded Darius (Master Muleygrubs), astonished at the size and number of the pack. "P-a-a-r shoots the fox," added he, in a loud tone of confident superiority.'

' "Nonsense, *Darius! nothin' of the sort!*" exclaimed the guilty Muleygrubs.'

' "You *d-o-o-o*," drawled Darius, eyeing his parent with a reproving scowl.'

' "Hush! you foolish boy!" stamped Marmaduke, looking as if he would eat him.'

' "Be bund to say he does," grunted Mr. Jorrocks, aloud to himself, with a knowing jerk of his head.'

The reader will by this time have gathered that Marmaduke Muleygrubs was not by any means an attractive character, for he has been shown to be an atrocious humbug, an arrant snob, niggardly and consequential.

Moreover, in declaring that he had plenty of foxes, he was what Mr. Jorrocks called ' "addin' the wice o' falsehood to the himputation o' selfishness." '

Altogether, we are afraid there is nothing to justify the plump little stay-maker being awarded a position of distinction among contemporary characters created by Surtees.

CHAPTER XII

MR. PUFFINGTON AND DICK BRAGG

(References are to *Mr. Sponge's Sporting Tour* and *Handley Cross*.)

MR. THOMAS PUFFINGTON was one of those fat, plethoric creatures who, on inheriting large fortunes from their forebears, think it unnecessary to do anything but loaf through life in a perpetual state of luxury, stuffing themselves to repletion, daily growing more and more obese, and spending their unearned wealth on ostentatious display.

Unlike so many Surtees characters, with or without a goodly allowance of life's comforts, Puffington was of a liberal turn of mind, and well he might be considering the riches bequeathed to him by a starch-making father, augmented by the not inconsiderable leavings of a well-to-do mother whose family had prospered exceedingly in the manufacture of stone-china.

At his birth, Thomas's parents decided to change their mode of living to one more in keeping with the standard they intended their son and heir to maintain. So they left their abode near the starch factory at Stepney, and settled down in the eminently respectable neighbourhood of Mecklenburgh Square.

Having neither brothers nor sisters, Thomas enjoyed, at the hands of a doting father and mother, their undivided attention and the unrestricted expenditure of their wealth. Their ambition was to make him a "gentleman" and, with this end in view, were at pains to give him every possible advantage that their vast resources could provide.

Following a public school education, nothing less than Christchurch, Oxford, would satisfy this aspiring couple who, while beholden to starch and stone-china for the means of conferring these benefits on their offspring, were, nevertheless, determined to divorce him from the atmosphere of commerce, and to plant him firmly among the aristocracy.

Soon, thanks to an unlimited supply of money and a kindly generous nature, young Puffington was hob-nobbing with sundry sprigs of the nobility, notably Lord Legbail, heir to the Marquis of Loosefish; the Honourable Jack Linchpin, a well-known amateur whip and son of Lord Splinterbars; Lord Firebrand; Sir Harry Blueun, etc., etc., and so wholeheartedly did he enter into their wild pursuits and high-spirited manner of living that he acquired the nickname of "Corinthian Tom," and was described by his admiring papa as "an amaazin' instance of a pop'lar man."

On ultimately succeeding, in the natural course of events, to the starch factory, Thomas Puffington had by that time become so consummate a swell that the idea of spending the rest of his life in the not very exciting occupation of making starch



Dick Bragg and his master, Mr. Thomas Puffington, M.F.H.
"Sc-e-e-use me, Sir"

did not appeal to him. He consequently sold the business to old Soapsuds, the foreman, and made up his mind to take to the country and become a land-owner.

At the time of his association with such notable characters as Soapey Sponge and Jack Spraggon, Puffington was rather more than forty years of age and, as revealed at the opening of our chapter, encumbered with a superfluity of flesh. Taking after his mother rather than his father—a little puddingy kind of man—he was tall and passably good-looking, though a surfeit of the flesh-pots, besides swelling his girth, had blown out his cheeks, giving him a chubby appearance that a pair of fair, bushy side-whiskers did nothing to minimize.

Despite the machinations of numerous match-making matrons, Puff had so far resisted all efforts to induce him to share his name and fortune, and it was when invitations to dinners, dances and all manner of society functions, once so plentiful, began to wane in consequence of hostesses with marriageable daughters despairing of bringing our friend to the point, that he decided on forsaking London and setting up as a country gentleman.

Not only did he purchase a fine property known as Hanby House, situated in a delightful part of the country, near the borough of Swillingford, but he quickly accepted the mastership of the Mangeysterne foxhounds, whose continued existence, owing to lack of funds, would otherwise have been out of the question.

A peep into Puff's wardrobe would have revealed hunting coats of scarlet and of buff-collared blue, indicating that, when at Oxford, he had hunted with Sir Thomas Mostyn's and the Duke of Beaufort's hounds. He was, therefore, not entirely without experience of "the sport of kings." Since those early days, however, increasing weight and the development of a rather cumbersome figure, tended to preclude the possibility of vigorous participation in the chase, and it must at once be admitted that our social-climbing friend accepted the mastership, not from enthusiasm for the sport which, if indeed he ever possessed any, had long since evaporated, but because the magic letters M.F.H. would give him a lift up in society and endue him with considerable importance.

His arrival at Hanby House was quickly followed by great activity in and about that imposing residence, for Puffington's upbringing had accustomed him to the best of everything, and the best of everything he was determined to have. No comfort, no convenience was forgotten, till the house bid fair to surpass all others in the neighbourhood for luxury and attractiveness.

Nor did he neglect the Mangeysterne establishment, which now began to emerge from its habitual hand-to-mouth existence. This brings us to another character who is almost worthy of a separate chapter. Certain it is that he himself would be horrified at sharing one with his despised master, for among all the insufferable, conceited, bumptious, self-satisfied creatures who tyrannize over the employers they condescend to serve, it would surely be no easy matter to find his equal.

Such was Dick Bragg who, by some mysterious means, got to know of vacant situations almost before they occurred. He now swooped down upon the weak and

gullible Puffington, who proved quite unequal to coping with his consummate cheek and impudence.

Bragg was a very neat, dapper little man, whose appearance proclaimed him to be no stranger to horses. Whether dressed for hunting or walking, he was invariably turned out to perfection, and if looks constituted the sole qualification for employment, he would never have been long out of a job. But, unfortunately, as a huntsman—for that, in fact, was his profession—he suffered from many shortcomings, notably a deplorable inability to show sport. His average record amounted to no more than six brace of foxes per season, for which paltry showing his employers were made to pay dearly; for Dick, as long as he was allowed to, insisted on running the establishment, hounds, horses and men, as he thought best, and the cost being no concern of his, he ordered just what he wanted in a lordly way, without so much as a thought of his master's pocket.

In addition to these defects, his overbearing manner and detestable conceit would hardly be endured, even by the most tolerant of employers, for any great length of time. To be sure, he knew how to make a good show so far as appearances went, but it amounted to little more than showing off, and, apart from this capacity for spectacular display, there was nothing to recommend him.

He was for ever boasting of the distinguished personages who, at one time or another, had been so fortunate as to enjoy his services, though always careful to avoid any reference to the causes of these associations being terminated.

Though excessively polite and respectful, there almost invariably existed, beneath the surface of his manner, a distinct under-current of impudence; while he seldom uttered without giving voice to some atrocious piece of egotism.

His attitude may, perhaps, best be made clear to the reader by the reproduction of a most presumptuous letter that he wrote to Mr. Jorrocks in answer to the latter's advertisement for a huntsman:

““Dear Sir,”” wrote Bragg.

““Seeing that you are in wants of an energetic gent to hunt your hounds, I beg to represent my qualifications for the appointment. I've held office Sir in some first rate administrations, yes Sir, in some first rate administrations Sir; my Lord Reynard Sir of Turkeypont Park Sir, the Duke of Downeybird of Downeybird Castle Sir, but my precious health not being quite adequate to the mental exertion and bodily fatigue consequent on a four or five days a week establishment, I have determined to sink the dignities of life a little in favor of peace and quietness and should have no objection to negotiate an alliance with you for the management of your hounds and country.

““One thing I should stipulate at starting, namely, that if we do not agree, you will have the kindness not mention this application as it would cause me to lose caste in the rank of life in which I have heretofore moved . . .

““In course you would allow me to appoint my own whips. . . . I say a whipper-in can be made, but a huntsman's talent must be born with him. I should basely dissemble if I hesitated to declare that in sporting science my

abilities shall yield to none. I will hunt a fox with any man—with the great Lord Elcho himself!

“To descend to particulars however; perhaps you’ll allow me to ask what your salary is—also what the draft hounds may be worth yearly per annum, and what you think the vails will come to—Also if I shall be allowed a boy to brush my clothes and clean my boots, as I shouldn’t like to have any dirty work to do—A line to the *Corner* will find me, and hoping to establish a mutually advantageous connection, I beg to subscribe myself

Yours obediently,

Richard Bragg.”

“P.S. *Quick* should be the word, as such a chance doesn’t offer every day.”

“To—Jorrocks Esq. M.F.H.

etc. etc. etc.

Handley Cross.”

This brought forth a typical Jorrockian reply which Master Dick had undoubtedly invited. Yet, far from taking any of the conceit out of him, we now find him at Hanby House, arrogant and assured as ever, angling for the job of Mr. Puffington’s huntsman.

About fifty years of age he was the ideal figure of a light-weight horseman, with a fine leg for a boot and turning the scales at little more than nine stone. His round, clean-shaved, fresh-complexioned, if somewhat wrinkled, face was surmounted by thin dark hair shot with grey, and had about it that indefinable, yet unmistakable, look that seems to grow upon the countenances of those whose life-work is concerned with horses. Grey, inquisitive little eyes suggested that nothing likely to be of advantage to Dick Bragg would be allowed to escape their notice.

He wore breeches and boots that fitted him to perfection, a tweed cut-away coat over a yellow waistcoat striped with blue, a black-spotted white stock, and a close-shaved hat, while under his arm he carried a silver-mounted cutting whip ornamented with a fox’s head. Small golden ornaments, similarly figured, acted as shirt-buttons at front and wrists, the immaculate costume being completed by dog-skin gloves, and a scarlet handkerchief ostentatiously emerging from a side pocket.

Such was the appearance of Bragg when meeting Mr. Puffington in the stable-yard of Hanby House.

“ ‘Sceuse me, sir’—with a half bow and half touch of the hat. “I’m Mister Bragg, sir—Mister Richard Bragg, sir, of whom you have most likely heard. I was huntsman, sir, to my Lord Reynard, sir,” observed the stranger, with a touch of the hat to each “sir.” “Thought p’raps you might have known his ludship, sir. Before him, sir, I held office, sir, under the Duke of Downeybird, sir, of Downeybird Castle, sir, in Downeybirdshire, sir.”

“Indeed!” replied Mr. Puffington.

“Hearing, sir, you had taken these Mangeysterne *dogs*, sir,” continued the stranger, with rather a significant emphasis on the word “*dogs*,” “it occurred to me

that possibly I might be useful to you, sir, in your new calling, sir; and if you were of the same 'pinion, sir, why, sir, I should be glad to negotiate a connection, sir.' "

"Hem!—hem!—hem!" coughed Mr. Puffington. "In the way of a huntsman do you mean?" afraid to talk of servitude to so fine a gentleman.'

"Just so," said Mr. Bragg, with a chuck of his head—"just so. The fact is, though I'm used to the grass countries, sir, and could go to the Marquis of Maney-lies, sir, to-morrow, sir, I should prefer a quiet place in a somewhat inferior country, sir, to a five-days-a-week one in the best." "

"Why, to tell you the truth," said Puff, looking rather sheepish—"to tell you the truth—I intended—I thought at least of—of—of—hunting them myself." "

"Well," said Mr. Bragg, drawing on his dog-skin glove as if to be off, "your gen'l'men 'untsmen are all very well on fine scentin' days when everything goes smoothly and well, and the 'ounds are tied to their fox as it were; but see them in difficulties—a failing scent, 'ounds pressed upon by the field, fox chased by a dog, storm in the air, big brook to get over to make a cast. Oh, sir, it makes even me, with all my acknowledged science and experience, shudder to think of the ordeal one undergoes!" "

"Indeed," exclaimed Mr. Puffington, staring, and beginning to think it mightn't be quite so easy as it looked.'

"Ah, sir," continued Mr. Bragg, with a shake of his head; "take my word for it, sir, there's nothin' like a professional. S-c-e-u-s-e me, sir," added he, with a low bow and a sort of military salute of his hat; "but dim all gen'l'men 'untsmen, say I." "

Finally, poor Puffington, becoming convinced by the loquacious, arrogant Bragg that any attempt to hunt hounds himself could only result in dismal failure, succumbed to the little man's incessant chatter, chiefly about his own prowess as a huntsman, and agreed to engage him, a decision that he, like other employers of Dick Bragg, lived bitterly to regret.

It took but a very short time for Bragg to sum up his new master, and, having done so, he set about the job of feathering his nest in no uncertain manner. He realized that the soft, good-natured Puffington would be as clay in his hands, and soon became dictator, in all but name, of the Hanby House hunting establishment, which promised to bring untold profit to the Bragg coffers.

One or two extracts from a letter he wrote to Benjamin Brick, his successor as huntsman to Lord Reynard, reveal the insolent disdain with which he referred to his employers, both past and present:

"I'm with one Mr. Puffington, a city gent. I shall only stay with him till I can get myself suited in the rank of life in which I have been accustomed to move." "

"This is only a poor, rough, ungentlemanly sort of shire, as far as I have seen of it; and however they got on with the things I found that they called hounds I can't for the life of me imagine. I understand they went stringing over the country like a flock of wild geese." "

"These hounds are at present called the Mangeysternes, a very proper title, I should say, from all I've seen and heard." "

“I hope your old man keeps a cleaner tongue in his head than he did when I was premier. I always say there was a good bargeman spoiled when they made him a lord.”

In the belief that Soapey Sponge was a sporting journalist, and having invited him to Hanby House on that account, Mr. Puffington could hardly have made more elaborate preparations had a visit been expected from some person of eminence.

As bachelors in middle age so often are, Puff was fussy to a degree that no old maid could have surpassed. He insisted on attending even to the smallest details himself, and with one eye constantly on the prospective broadcasting of his fame throughout the land by means of Sponge's pen, spared no expense in preparing a display, both in the house and out of it, in keeping with the reputation of “an amaazin' pop'lar man,” whose immense resources, derived from starch and pottery, not even he could compute with anything approaching accuracy.

In addition to Sponge, there was a large house-party to meet the supposed “Nimrod,” comprising many spongers and cadgers almost as impudent as Soapey himself—hard-drinkers, hard-eaters, hard-talkers, but very few hard-riders.

Following a night of considerable debauch, the great day arrived when the glories of the re-named Hanby Hunt were to be displayed for the admiration and eulogy of the “illustrious writer.”

With much ceremony and ostentation, Dick Bragg, surrounded by his hounds and attended by his whips and second horseman, appeared before the house. The general turn-out left little to be desired, though Bragg's insufferable conceit and showing-off would have antagonized any critic of the establishment.

At last, satisfied that he had given the assembled field the pleasure of having a good look at his immaculate appearance, our model huntsman proceeded to take command of his master and everybody else.

“We should be moving, I think, sir,” observed Bragg, with a rap of his forefinger against his cap peak. “It's past eleven,” added he, looking at his gold watch, and shutting it against his cheek.

“Oh, we'll draw Rabbitborough Gorse,” said Puffington.

“Sc-e-e-use me, sir,” replied Bragg, with a smile, and another rap of the cap: “sc-e-e-use me, sir, but I'm going to Hollyburn Hanger first.”

“Ah, well, Hollyburn Hanger,” replied Puffington, complacently; “either will do very well.” If Puff had proposed Hollyburn Hanger, Bragg would have said Rabbitborough Gorse.

After a fairish run, during which Bragg's abilities as a huntsman were not unduly taxed, he was lucky enough to kill his fox, so that Sponge could count himself lucky, on this, his first day with Puff's hounds, to see them run into one of the half-dozen brace that Bragg normally accounted for in a whole season.

“‘Ord dim him,” said he (Bragg), turning up the fox's grim head with his foot, “but Mr. Bragg's an awkward customer for gen'lemen of your description.”

“You hunted him *well*,” exclaimed Charley Slapp, who was trumpeter general of the establishment.

““Oh, sir,” replied Bragg, with a smirk and a condescending bow, “if Richard Bragg can’t kill foxes, I don’t know who can.””

““How many brace is that?” asked Puffington, with the most matter-of-course air, as he trotted up.”

““*Seventeen brace*, your grace, I mean to say my lord, that’s to say *sur*,” replied Bragg, with a strong emphasis on the *sur*, as if to say “I’m not used to you snobs of Commoners.””

The proceedings terminated with Mr. Puffington presenting Sponge with the brush, and everything seemed propitious for a highly complimentary review of the day’s events, bringing with it undying fame to the Master of the Hanby, late Mangeysterne, foxhounds.

But the reader, having absorbed our second chapter, will be aware of the account concocted jointly by Soapey Sponge and Jack Spraggon, and of its disastrous mutilation, at the hands of Miss Grimes, before going to press.

Thus poor Puffington, realizing how thoroughly he had been taken in, and that instead of the hoped-for fame, widespread ridicule seemed likely to be his portion as a result of the reconstructed article, found himself, like other equally misguided extenders of hospitality to Soapey Sponge, faced with the problem of uprooting the now unwelcome, yet no less adhesive, guest, who, as we know, ultimately transferred his valuable patronage to the luckless collector of gibbey-sticks, Mr. (puff) Jogglebury (wheeze) Crowdey.


Now, when Lord Scamperdale, to console himself for the loss of his shadow, Jack Spraggon, who, it will be remembered, was killed in a steeplechase, transformed Emily Jawleyford into a Countess and entrusted her with the management of his ancestral home: and when her elder sister, Amelia, disappointed in her quest of the coveted coronet—lost, it was believed, by injudicious recourse to the rouge pot—sought solace in the plump, capacious arms of good-natured old Puffington, who, as the reader will have no difficulty in appreciating, jumped at the chance of becoming brother-in-law to a Countess: these happy events were followed by the amalgamation of the Flat Hat and Hanby Hunts, his lordship having apparently overcome his strong distaste for the “confounded haberdasher,” as he had once described poor Puff.

The new arrangement, however, meant the end of our overweening friend, Dick Bragg, who, in consequence, was again to be ‘seen any Monday at Tattersall’s, s-c-e-u-s-e-ing himself, and offering his service to masters of hounds.’

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